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63rd year of publication

Do the Tar Sands need a Sabbatical?

John Hiemstra

Did the title jolt you?!?

Terms like "tar sands" and "oil sands" are so ideologically loaded that they often polarize and even shut down discussions. The very words we use to discuss the oil sands underscore the enormous role that ideologies play in our interpretations.

I spent the past academic year (2007-2008) on sabbatical, studying the character and meaning of Alberta's tar sands developments. It turns out, by the way, that the material extracted is neither *oil* nor *tar*, but *bitumen*. I have started using these terms interchangeably to invite others into careful dialogue and discernment about the oil sands development arguments and evidence.

Ideology not only skews our interpretations of the oil sands boom, it also shapes how many operate within or against these massive, complex, and often destructive developments. If we want to engage the tar sands problems with biblical wisdom, we need not only to *speak across* ideological divides, but also *dig into* the deep and distorted roots of these ideologies.

Icon of globalization

Another theme that emerged during my oil sands studies is the way these developments function as an icon of world-wide issues.

An icon symbolizes something of greater significance through a literal or metaphorical depiction, often something of deep religious, cultural, political, or economic importance. Alberta's oil sands are an astonishing "re-presentation" of many of the sweeping challenges produced by globalized culture, e.g. climate change, wealth generation, income disparities, resource depletion, wasteful lifestyles, technological mastery, human migration, economic globalization, and much more.

I've come to the conclusion that globalization can be "opened up" by different visions of life. The church could respond to the "icon of globalization" in our backyard with silence, thereby implicitly pushing a survival of the fittest, dog-eat-dog vision. Or, it could begin developing an alternative vision of justice and stewardship for the tar sands, demonstrating how we might practically care for all human and nonhuman creation.

Isolated disciplinary studies

Another startling theme buried within my sabbatical research is the fact that a modernist approach to social and natural science sometimes makes the tar sands problems worse! In a nutshell, this occurs as follows.

The modern approach to science divides reality into smaller and smaller disciplinary objects, e.g., water, labour, housing, investment, GHG emissions, tailings ponds, infrastructure, technological improvements, governance, and even narrower issues. This narrowing is believed to be good because the resulting discoveries automatically re-unite into a single body of knowledge that accurately mirrors and predicts life in the oil sands. This growing scientific knowledge of nature's secrets opens the door to increased wealth and happiness.

The problem arises, however, that oil companies, governments, unions, and even tar-sands critics, often use this fragmented knowledge to narrowly identify problems and issues, and then to prescribe 'technical adjustment fixes'. While these solutions sometimes prove useful, they are premised on such a constricted understanding of life that they simply fail to take into account the larger dynamics driving the whole oil sands developments. Consequently, 'technical adjustment solutions' often end up tackling symptoms and, in some cases, paradoxically making things worse!

A river flows through it: Athabasca river and toxic tailings ponds

Environmental professionalism

This brings me to environmental professionalism. The King's University College, for example, often talks about developing "Christian environmental professionals" in its innovative ENVS program. My tar sands studies, however, raises a note of caution.

The practice of doing narrow scientific studies and using technical adjustment solutions for resulting problems, invites a problematic view of professionalism. In this view, a professional simply applies her narrow rational/scientific expertise to problems and thus helps the oil sands developments run more smoothly. Environmental professionals simply work alongside other engineering, chemical and economic professionals to identify problems and create technical solutions. This may indeed be helpful in some cases. But, it courts the danger of overlooking the central thrust behind these problems.

Quite correctly, Environmental Studies at King's and other institutions has raised critical questions about this view of professionalism. We have aimed to produce environmental professionals that go beyond applying neutral-rational technical expertise to problems. The Christian community needs to continue to develop professionals who identify problems and search for solutions with the knowledge that the overall direction of oil sands developments, and the 'way of life' it fuels, may need re-orientation! We need to continue training critically constructive Christian environmental professionals.

Interdisciplinary of environmental problems

My oil sands sabbatical also

See **Tar sands** *on page 6*

Politics

Obama: America's new Democrat

Philip C. Bom

Canadian conservatives will be relieved with Prime Minister Harper's stronger minority government. If Obama is elected president, the Prime Minister may want to be cautious. There may be a need to maintain Canada's political independence.

Traditional Canadian-American relationship has been based on *collective* international security of *independent* nation states. In other words, nations cooperate together as independent countries to maintain international peace. This is in direct contrast to the world-order concept of "common security."

Candidate Obama heralds change and hope, but his ideological message reads like a "copy and paste" from documents written by socialists of the past century. He presents himself as a new politician but has adopted an old "world order" agenda. Obama's policies will certainly produce change – but a fundamental change which will shock most Americans and Canadians.

Obama is a New-Left democrat. The Democratic Party's platform (authored by Senator Obama's policy director) reads like a planetary manifesto for a new global order.

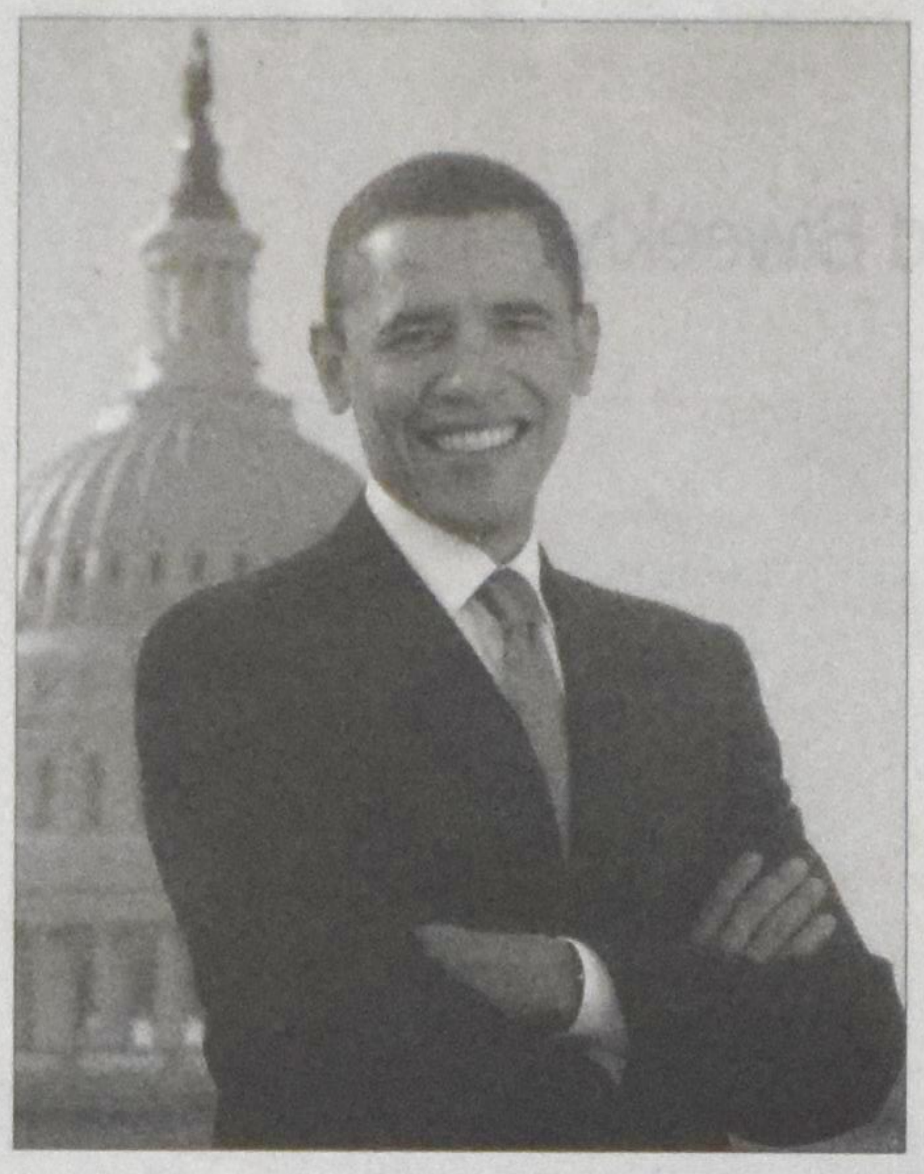
Senator Obama himself has said he seeks to provide "a world that stands as one" with "global leadership grounded in the understanding that the world shares a common security and a common humanity" (Berlin speech and *Foreign Affairs* article, July/August 2007, *FA*). As president, Obama promises to "strengthen our common security by investing in our common humanity."

Planetary security

Obama adopts the old framework of international socialists**.** He jettisons the traditional meaning of security and adopts the view of democracy as social **economic** democracy. In his writings and speeches, Obama consistently calls for "building just, secure, democratic societies (*FA*)."

Senator Obama ties the concept of national security to global poverty. In the *FA*-article, Obama claims that "the United States has a direct national security interest in dramatically reducing global poverty and joining with our allies in sharing more of our riches to help those most in need." He has the audacity to proclaim: "Like it or not, if we want to make America more secure, **we are going to have to help make the world more secure"** (*AH*, **304**). For him, global security means eliminating world poverty.

According to the 1995 Commission on Global Governance (CGG), "...the security of people must be regarded as a goal as important as the security of states." In addition, "The primary goals of global security should be … the security of people and the planet." The Democratic Party platform adopts this definition of national



security (encompassing environmental security). The platform proudly promotes "Protecting our Security and Saving our Planet" as if they are one and the same. "We understand that climate change is not just an economic issue or an environmental concern – this is a national security crisis."

Yet, while Obama promises to protect the American people, how often does he promise to protect the USA as an independent nation state? Following the ideology of CGG, he blurs the distinction between our national homeland and "our human homeland."

Ideas from the 1970s

As noted, however, Obama's political ideas are hardly novel. Concepts and phrases (e.g. common humanity; common security; one world; economic security) in his speeches and in the platform can be found in the agendas of international socialists like the late Willy Brandt and Olof Palme. Even Obama's words of "change" and "hope" date back to 1981.

Both Willy Brandt and Olof Palme were important international socialist leaders during the 1970s: Brandt as Chancellor of Germany, and Olof Palme as Prime Minister of Sweden. In addition, they served together as leaders of the Socialist International with Brandt as President and Palme as Vice-President. Of particular interest is their later selection to chair commissions on development (Brandt) and disarmament (Palme). The commissions advanced the socialist perspective of the 1974 UN *Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States* which laid the foundation for the new international economic order. The commissions also sought to promote a linkage between disarmament and development. The same perspective appears in Obama's positions.

Reject past prejudices

In the 1980 *Commission on International Development Issues* report, Chairman Brandt made "a plea for change." He yearned for a new generation that would "liberate people from outworn ideas, from the grip of narrowly conceived national interests and from the passions and prejudices inherited from the past. A new international economic order will need men and women with a new mentality and wider outlook to make it work…." In his nomination speech, Obama agrees with Brandt on the "need to cast off the worn-out ideas and politics of the past."

Going back even further, the 1974 *Charter* sought to establish a "just and equitable economic and social order" and promoted "economic security for development, in particular of the developing countries." A few years later, Brandt advocated "steps along the path to what could genuinely be called a society of nations, a new world order" based on international economic justice (redistribution of wealth and power among all nations). Note the similarity with Obama's words: "sharing more of our riches to help those most in need."

International sovereignty

Brandt believed that world politics should move beyond an UN organization of nation states "towards a genuine society of nations." In addition, the 1975 *Human Manifesto* rejected the principle of independent nation states and pledged to place "the human interest above the national interest, and human sovereignty above national sovereignty." This is exactly what Obama has done in his emphasis on defending the American people (versus defending the USA as an independent nation state).

National security was redefined decades ago. The late international socialist, Olof Palme, (Chairman of the *Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues*) advanced a new definition. "The security – even the existence – of the nations of the world is interdependent." The report elaborated by stating "… that nations must come to understand that the maintenance of world peace must be given a higher priority than the assertion of their own ideological or political positions." "Common security requires that people live in dignity and peace, that they have enough to eat and are able to find work and live in a world without poverty and destitution."

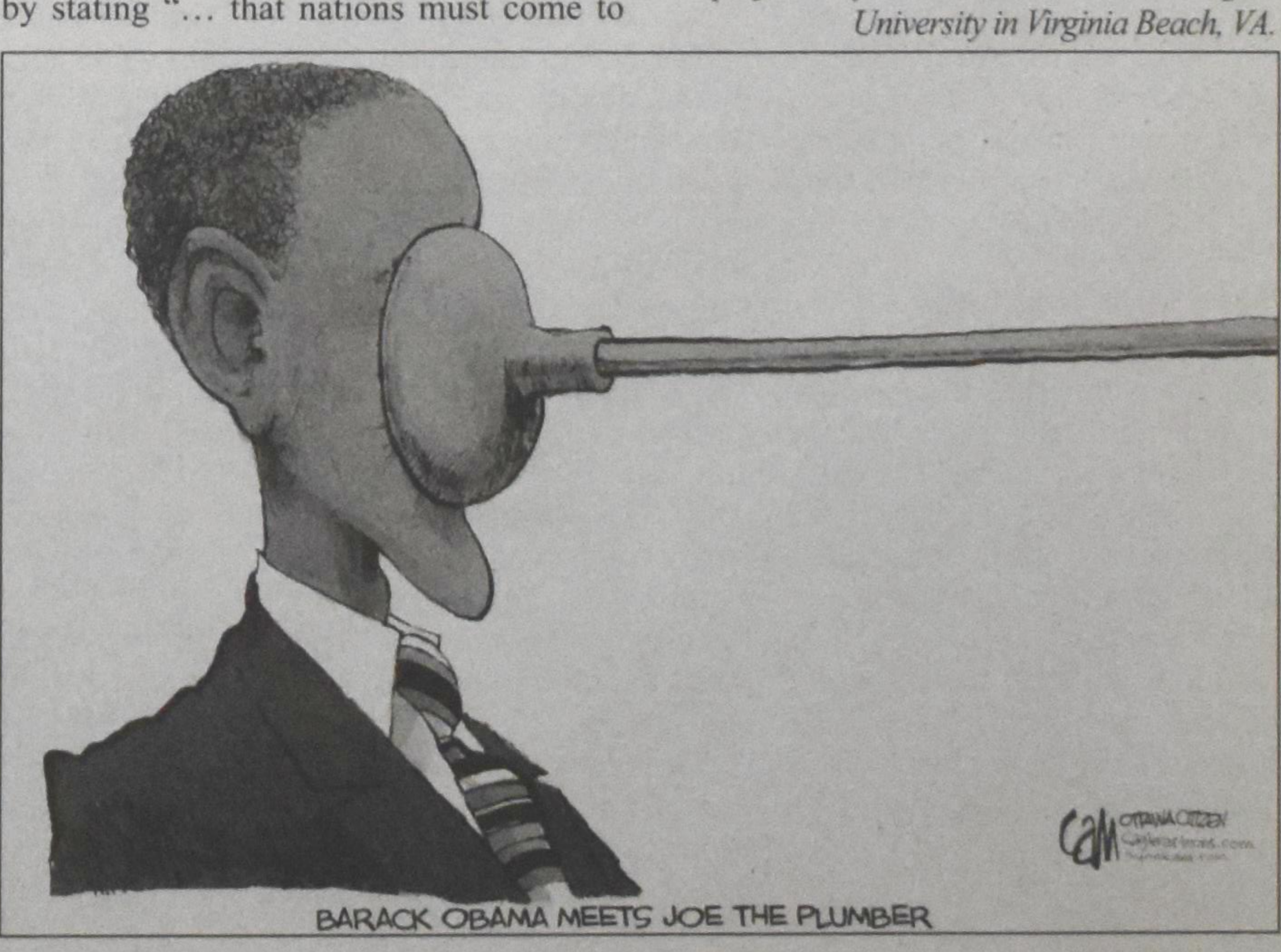
Brandt hoped that a future leader would arise from "among the young generations who will soon carry major political responsibility." It seems that Obama may well be that New Leader for whom Brandt hoped.

New global order

Senator Clinton may be liberal Democrat, but the left-of-liberal Obama captured the Party nomination as a hero of hope and change. However, upon closer examination, his message of change and hope is anchored in old socialist doctrines. Obama launched his political career as a local community organizer. If elected, he will affirm his career as the great global community organizer – and will fulfill the dreams of world socialists like Brandt and Palme.

The great New Leader's "heart is filled with love for this country" (*AH*, 362). On the other hand, his political head is filled with love for a new global order. He appears to be enthralled with dreams of global transformation through common security, economic security, and economic democracy – concepts foreign to traditional American international policy. He could very well be a good UN Secretary General, but to entrust him with American presidential leadership will be a bridge too far. If elected, it will mean the end of America's political, military, and legal independence, and may very well have major consequences for Canada.

Philip C. Bom (philpbom@msn.com) is a professor of International Politics at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA.



BARACK OBAMA MEETS JOE THE PLUMBER

Perspective

Eternal Student
Peter Schuurman

Five or more ways to read the Bible

Peter Schuurman

Worship wars seem to have over-taken the Bible wars. I remember the "inerrant Bible" versus the "infallible Bible" and "inspired Bible" debates of yesteryear. Still, approaches to the Bible range from those who quip "the Bible says" and then quote a verse as if it explains itself, to those who will counter by saying, "No, that's just Paul's opinion, and it doesn't carry weight today. We've moved beyond that."

Imagine the Bible as a massive range of mountains. I remember living in Vancouver, B.C., and how impressed I was by the ancient majesty of the peaks around the city. As time wore on, however, they became more and more familiar to me, and they became just a part of the backdrop of my coming and going through town. You remember them in so far as they are useful to you – for some weekend exercise or showing curious or ambitious visitors. Once and a while you note their impressive grandeur, but they are not the wondrous force that consistently dwarfs your humble life – not like they used to be.

The Bible as extended family

Does familiarity breed indifference – or even contempt? I believe it can. Most of us have a rich and dynamic relationship with the Bible that moves through a range of stages, perhaps not unlike your relationship with your extended family. Some family – like some books of the Bible – you spend more time with at different chapters of your life. Some are there consistently and deeply throughout your life, but others you only encounter at baptisms, weddings, hospitals and funerals.

We need to be in contact with the Bible throughout our life. Not as a wooden rule book, a science text or as a piece of kitchen furniture – and neither simply a "great Western literature." We need to remember that God and his kingdom are the ultimate authority and not the words on the page. The Bible has authority – like a double-edged sword – because it is a trustworthy vehicle of God and his kingdom, by the Spirit's power. It is an authoritative story – a narrative that ought to shape us our whole life through – so that we can be better practitioners of its unfolding drama of redemption. It is a word that needs to become fleshed.

Five D's of Bible reading

One thing I have found helpful in our discussions of the Bible is describing different ways of reading the Bible. There is not only one way of reading, and if we understand that the Bible can be read in different reading styles with different motivations we may come to understand not only the richness of Bible reading but also how brothers and sisters may be reading it differently from us.

I call this scheme "The Five D's of Bible Reading." As you go down the list the reading approach becomes increasingly reflective and critical and the intended audience gets considerably wider.

1. **Doxological reading:** here the Bible is read purely as worship and praise to an audience of one: God. Scripture is recited in a liturgy, as part of a litany or as a song or shout to the Lord. Here the motivation is not to analyze or even to personally "get something out of it" for the day. It is intended to flow through you as you embody the words and have them live in you. Your mood or life situation need not correspond with the doxological reading. It is a practice, a discipline.

2. **Devotional reading:** some refer to this a "quiet time" and others as "meditation." Here we read the Bible, usually alone, in the hopes that it will personally edify us. There are a variety of approaches: some prefer the ancient practice of *lectio devina* while others rely on a devotion book to accompany the reading. Often you are reading with God and not only listening to him, but also listening to your life at the same time.

3. **Discipleship reading:** I'm using this term to refer to any Bible reading intended for mutual edification that takes place in a small group or congregational setting. This can be a reading for moral and spiritual teaching or preaching. This may include also a reading of our cultural context in order to contrast or compare it with the message of the text. The application, however, remains directed at the people who are present or part of the local community.

4. **Dogmatic reading:** this may be easily misunderstood, so let me be clear: I do not see dogma as a negative thing. Dogma is another word for "teaching" or "doctrine," and modernists have dogma as much as fundamentalists. This kind of reading is a reading intended for broader educational purposes – for explaining the positions of an agency or denomination. One example would be textual readings that happen in adult Sunday School or in a baptism/profession of faith class. It may be a reading that has significance for a faith community that stretches across the country or across the globe.

5. **Dissertational reading:** This is the most critical and scholarly form of reading. Here the person reads with an analytical approach, even a suspicious mind, taking nothing for granted. They will examine commentaries, pursue the historical and rhetorical context and even compare feminist, neo-Marxist, Latino, and atheist readings. Their audience stretches around the globe and beyond the church – including people of all faiths who may be interested in biblical scholarship.

It is interesting to note is that someone who reads the Bible consistently on a devotional basis will not understand one who only reads the Bible for dissertational purposes. And vice-versa. Some people are sadly locked in to only one approach. Yet for a Christian many readings may overlap, as a preacher may consult dissertational and devotional material in order to create a powerful discipleship reading.

No doubt there are other ways to read the Bible that I have not mentioned – deconstructive, disillusioned, and "desert" readings, for example. This last "d" can be either a time when you do not immediately feel the benefits of Bible reading or when you have stopped reading it altogether for a period. I'm not sure the latter is ever healthy for long, although I confess I have tried to hide in the desert before. But if you stay connected to the church, you cannot avoid God's story. It haunts you. Martin Luther said: "The Bible is alive – it has hands and grabs hold of me, it has feet and runs after me." The haunting, however, is not in the book so much as in the Holy Ghost that inspires the reading.

Peter Schuurman is the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader and resides in Guelph, Ontario.

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Editorial

Blinded by the god of our age

Bert Witvoet

We've just been through an election in Canada. Each political party tried to convince voters that they were good for the country, and, above all, that they were telling the truth. The other leaders and parties are liars. I don't look at politicians so much as liars. They are no more inclined to lie than farmers and professors. But I do think that a lot of them don't know exactly were the truth is located.

Truth is very important in God's world. Jesus said time and again: "I tell you the truth," and then he made a statement or told a story. Why did Jesus make a point of reminding his hearers that he was speaking the truth? He must have realized that the usual discourse or teaching of his day was shot through with lies.

In Jesus' day and in ours, there are two enemies of the truth: people who lie and people who are blind. Those who lie know the truth but suppress it. Those who are blind are not lying; they just don't know where the truth is situated. I would say that our society and our culture suffer mostly from blindness. Politicians, like most of us, are afflicted with poor eyesight. Lies play a significant role in ordinary human relations. But blindness is a sickness that infects all of us, even institutions. Satan is called the father of lies. He majors in twisting the truth. Satan himself is not blind. He knows what is true and what is false. But he has managed to drop the fog of blindness into this world so that even well-intentioned and honest people can and do mislead us.

Honest groping

Blindness explains why politicians can lead us down a slippery slope of materialism and foolish social, environmental and economic policies with the noblest of intentions. It explains why smart astronomers and physicists do not see the name of God written in this universe. Blindness explains why kind people think it's inhumane to have laws against abortion on demand. Blindness explains why decent and honest people believe that the source of knowledge is human rationality and intuition. Blindness causes pollution and destruction of species, dependence on the might of weaponry and a trust in unlimited economic growth. Blindness argues that education should be neutral, that democracy is the road to happiness, and that there is no such thing as absolute truth.

Has anything changed since the beginning of time? Jesus railed against the Pharisees as "blind guides," and the Apostle Paul defends the gospel of truth by saying that "the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4). One could also expect such a statement to be made in 2 Torontonians 5:1 or 1 New Yorker 3:7. The god of our age – consumerism, materialism, pragmatism, secularism – has blinded the minds of our contemporaries.

Spiritual submission

Knowing the truth is first of all a spiritual matter. Why? Because truth is a mystery that goes far beyond our comprehension. Truth is not a set of propositions that we must try to apprehend. In fact, we cannot apprehend truth; it must apprehend us. That truth is absolute, but our knowledge of that truth is not absolute, and that applies to Christians, too, lest we should boast. Paul tells us clearly in 1 Corinthians 13 that we know in part. The King James rendition says that we "see through a glass darkly," or perhaps the image is of looking at yourself in a discolored mirror. Whatever the original text had in mind, we know that our knowledge of the truth is incomplete – not necessarily wrong, but limited. Christians confess that God is the source of truth. He is the maker of all things. Only he knows how the creation hangs together. God reveals things to us that help us understand in part. That assurance gives us both confidence and humility.

Living the truth

Our knowledge is first of all a trust in God's faithfulness. The etymological origin of the word "truth" is, in fact, "troth." *Troth* refers to faithfulness, reliability, loyalty and veracity. In that sense, truth refers to a relationship we have with God and with his creation. God's truth tells it like it is. That truth is revealed in his Word but it also lies embedded in his Creation. Truth is a pathway we must follow. It is not, first of all, a set of doctrinal statements that we do well to embrace. It is not, first of all, a worldview that we do well to incorporate. It is a dynamic reality that we must live with all our hearts and minds.

How do we stand over against the claims of our society that truth is relative or that there are many truths, or many paths that lead to God? We admit that our knowledge of truth is imperfect, but the source of truth is absolute. When human beings no longer see God as the source of truth, the journey of life lacks a compass. When humanity as individual or as collective is seen as the origin of "truth" we are adrift on a sea of uncertainty. Not only is truth a compass for us, it is a path on which we travel. In Psalm 26:3 David confesses, "For your love is ever before me, and I walk continually in your truth."

What is truth?

Of course, you cannot speak of truth without speaking of knowledge. How do we know the truth? Philosophers have come up with different theories about knowledge of truth. I will mention five different theories here.

First of all, there is the "correspondence" theory of truth. Whatever corresponds to the reality out there is truth. I like that definition if you place it in the context of God's creation and his revelation. But the correspondence theory becomes less reliable if we test our notion of truth against "perceived" or "virtual" reality.

The second theory is called the "coherence" theory. Whatever hangs together can be seen as truth. This is important, of course. Our knowledge of truth has to have internal integrity. But if it does not correspond to God's reality, no amount of coherence safeguards the truth.

Thirdly, there is the "constructivist" theory of truth. In this theory, truth is seen as an historical and culturally conditioned social construct. There is no transcendental truth here. Our contemporary view of "marriage" illustrates how a culturally conditioned view of homosexual relations ends up being the "true" view.

The fourth is the "consensus" theory. Whatever a group of people agrees on is the truth. Not a very solid foundation for truth, if you ask me. If you believe this, then you would have to say that there is, politically speaking, a Conservative truth, a Liberal truth, and an NDP truth.

Fifthly there is the "pragmatic" theory of truth. In this theory, truth is confirmed by good results. But who decides what is a good result? Is a thriving automobile industry a good thing?

All these theories make truth look very unstable, not grounded. Even the "correspondence" theory is nothing without faith in God's revealed Word and without the lifting of our blindness by the Spirit of truth. In a perfect world I would trust all five theories of truth. Truth must correspond to reality, must cohere, will be expressed in cultural diversity, should have consensus and will yield good results. But if you fail to take into account the story of what has happened to us during the course of history – a good creation with reliable structure, a fall into sin with its resulting blindness and lies, forgiveness and redemption through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus, and the ultimate restoration of the new earth – then you miss out on the new rules for interpreting reality.

Truth will out

The history of humankind is replete with the suppression of the truth, but truth has a way of breaking through. Have you noticed how empires that rely on human strength always collapse? Have you noticed that crooks often get caught in unforeseen ways? "Truth will out!" Not always, of course. Some lies persist and cover up the truth until the Day of Reckoning when the book of true history will be opened. But there is something left in the creation that resists and rejects the lie. We call that common grace. The fallen world is still upheld, and the goodness of the original creation still shines through. Humanist theories about truth also collapse in time. That's because the lie is basically alien to the creation. Evil doesn't work. The creation groans every time evil is injected into its veins. It gasps and vomits until the poison is cleared away by the truth.

Holy mountain

But the real hope lies not in the remnant of a good creation, in common grace. Common grace restrains evil but does not get rid of it. Our real hope lies in the dispensation of special grace and truth. Light has come into this world, light that will banish the darkness and remove the blindness. Truth has come into this world in the person of Jesus Christ who successfully defeated the father of all lies. God's Word and Spirit have been given to us as guides in the wilderness of confusing theories about truth.

We are invited to bathe in the waters of life and truth. We may pray for the lifting of blindness and for the removal of lies in our midst so that our walking in truth will correspond to God's reality, will be coherent, will be expressed in personal and cultural diversity, will have consensus and will yield good results

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EDITORIAL TEAM & PRODUCTION STAFF

Acting editor: Albertus Witvoet **bert.witvoet@sympatico.ca**

Circulation: Rose der Nederlanden **rose@christiancourier.ca**

Accounts/Advertising manager: Ineke Medcalf-Strayer **ads@christiancourier.ca**

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Tragedy in the age of entitlement

Thank you for your two interesting reviews of *The Shack*, which I had just finished reading. There is no doubt that your two reviewers both get it right. The story gives little help in "knowing God" as he reveals himself in his Word (but why imagine that a work of fiction would?). But the writing may indeed assist us in knowing him in that other sense of "knowing" – getting some sense of what we make of God and his presence in our lives.

My problem with the book is at another level, its merit as fiction. At about page 60 a real-life thriller suddenly becomes religious propaganda under the guise of fantasy or dream or mystic experience, and the story almost ceases to exist. No wonder theologians hate it; it is neither fish nor fowl. Repeatedly it is compared to Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, but *The Shack* is in no sense an allegory. When Pilgrim and Pliable end up in the Slough of Despond, we do not worry about such representative journeyers, but about whether we ourselves might succumb to something similar. In *The Shack* we are expected to care very much about the difficulties faced by Mack and his family. Mack remains Mack and the Three do not *represent* God; they *are* God.

But what I really find troubling is that *The Shack* is the sort of propaganda everyone seems to be buying into at present. Do people who are dying of hunger in war torn countries spend so much time asking why God is doing bad things to good people? Did our forefathers, who often buried at least half the children born to them and often their young mothers as well, find themselves having to exonerate God of such enormities?

I suspect that Christians before this age of entitlements to the good life simply accepted that no tragedy was beyond what we fallen creatures deserved. This rating God by how well he performs in my life is not a healthy Christian reaction to life's sorrows. Christ has made all things new, but we are not told to look for it in this present age. Why are we forever looking for his "hug" instead of believing his promises?

I shudder to hear of "anointed writers," but let me recommend a consistent work of fiction by one so labeled, C.S. Lewis. His *Till We Have Faces* also deals with exonerating God, or the gods, but the accusation that the leading character brings against him turns back upon herself. She is the guilty one, not God. Lewis recognized our modern problem. In his essay "God in the Dock" he writes "The ancient man approached God as the accused person approaches his judge. For the modern man the roles are reversed. He is the judge: God is in the dock. He is quite a kindly judge: if God should have a reasonable defence for being the god who permits war, poverty and disease, he is ready to listen to it. The trial may even end in God's acquittal. But the important thing is that Man is on the Bench and God in the Dock."

Rev. John Koole
Strathroy, Ontario

President Cooper announces intention to step down

On Friday, September 26, Dr. Justin Cooper, announced to the Board of Governors that he will not be seeking a fourth term as President of Redeemer University. Dr. Cooper, who has been with Redeemer even before the institution's inception in 1980, will step down when his current term concludes on June 30, 2010. By that time, he will have served Redeemer for 30 years, including the last 16 as President.

Dr. Cooper notes two principal reasons for his decision: "Many of Redeemer's senior administrators will be retiring from 2010 on; I believe it is very important that a new President be able to build that new team. Another factor is my sense that the Lord is leading me to take my passion for the mission of Christian higher education and to explore greater involvement in promoting this mission in other avenues of service that the Lord will open up."

Ray Pennings, the Chair of the Board of Governors of Redeemer, notes that Dr. Cooper's vision, commitment and perseverance have been instrumental in Redeemer's development. "Redeemer was established and accredited in an environment not friendly to faith-based institutions and it is not an exaggeration to say that humanly speaking, Dr. Cooper's role has been pivotal. His evident passion for Christian education and dogged persistence that did not stop when obstacles were raised have served Redeemer well and he will leave big shoes to fill."

The Board of Governors has put into place a succession review committee, which will help identify the characteristics that will be sought in future administrators. A Search Committee for a new President will be announced in February. In the meantime, Dr. Cooper will finish his term with an ambitious agenda: "There is much that can be done in the next two years which will enhance our mission through program development, including continuing education, and will strengthen our religious identity, internal decision making, financial vitality, institutional profile and national reputation. I look forward to continuing to work with the Board, staff and faculty to reach these goals."

Heaven-bound letter to Harry

What you are about to read has sort of percolated in my mind over the past months. I wanted to write a word of deep appreciation for Harry der Nederlanden's writings in Christian Courier. *At the recent ICS Conference I heard that Harry had been promoted to glory. I was too late with my letter. I am writing as though he is still here even though I do not believe in communicating with the dead. Maybe the Lord will share with him the great appreciation that is still here for him by so many people. I don't know if the saints in heaven know anything about what is happening on earth. However, I would not be surprised if they did. I believe that even more so as I am reading "Heaven" by Randy Alcorn.*

Harry I have loved your editorials. Recently, I have said in a sermon in a few churches in connection with serving the Lord in our families (Joshua 24:15), that we need sound reading material in our homes. I made specific reference to *Christian Courier*. From my perspective, we need a magazine, such as this. That magazine, and now I am talking your editorials, always looked at various issues and situations from a solid biblical reformational perspective. They were always so refreshing and written from a basic deeply spiritual philosophical outlook rooted in scripture. This was also true in world situations such as Afghanistan, Columbia, Iran or our own Canadian politics.

How I identified with your tribute to an old friend (your van of so many years). I also keep cars for a long time and have a hard time parting with the old vehicles.

When you wrote about the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit in connection with the Third Wave Movement, I could identify more with your article than anything else I read or heard, including the Majority Synodical Study Report. Your insights were truly a gift from the Holy Spirit!

Thank you for sharing how you dealt with cancer. I realize that we can only put a fraction of what we experience in words. What a testimony – whether it be about the baptism of your grandchild while you knew your time on earth was almost up or eating hospital food or writing about evangelism.

Now your life is over. You have joined the cloud of witnesses Hebrews 12 speaks of. You are now in the presence of Jesus on whom we continue to fix our eyes and in whose presence you now rejoice and rest from your labours. May the Lord continue to raise up people like yourself who address our culture, all of life, from out of the biblical reformational perspective. Unless the latter is done in our journalism, in our schools, labour, politics, and families as well as from our pulpits, we are fighting a losing battle.

God bless your dear wife, Rose, and your entire family with his unfailing presence. As the saints in heaven, among other things, also pray according to Revelation 6, may that prayer soon be answered. *Then* Jesus will return, to fully restore the entire creation, a restoration you touched on in your powerful reflection on Psalm 91 (August 27, 2007, pg. 4).

Rev. Ralph Koops,
Cambridge, Ontario

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Thirty years and counting

Intangible Things

Heidi VanderSlikke

Thirty years ago today I walked down the aisle with flowers in my hair, holding my brother's arm. I will never forget my smiling groom waiting at the front of the church, handsome in a tan-colored tuxedo and matching bowtie. My mother, tears in her eyes, clutched a lace hanky and stood beside my soon-to-be in-laws.

We had asked the minister to speak on Mark 10: 6-9. With my limited Bible knowledge at the time, those were the only verses I knew that dealt specifically with marriage. I had no idea they were preceded by the Pharisees' questioning Jesus about divorce. I just liked the part about man not putting asunder what God had brought together.

In truth, I don't recall anything of the pastor's message that day. I do remember my bouquet quivered as we made our vows, and I nearly started to giggle. (I get giddy when I'm nervous.) And I remember the triumphant notes of the pipe organ right after the minister introduced us as, "Mr. and Mrs. Jack VanderSlikke."

Our wedding day was a whirlwind, with the ceremony at two o'clock, supper at four, followed by an open house at my mother's. By nine we were on our way to the airport to catch a night flight to Florida. Sitting in the plane, my cheeks literally ached from smiling, but I couldn't have stopped if I tried.

In some ways it seems like only yesterday. On the other hand, I barely remember life without Jack.

Different times

1978 was the midst of the first "energy crisis," although gas sold for a fraction of what it's worth today. Muscle cars gave way to sub-compacts, making it harder to tell the difference between a Chevy and a Ford. Pierre Trudeau was Prime Minister. Jimmy Carter occupied the White House. Kitchen appliances came in fashionable shades like harvest gold and avocado green. Music was available on vinyl records, or for the car, on 8-track tapes. The computer in my office was the size of a piano and my calculator and typewriter took up half the desktop. No one had a household computer. The Internet was science fiction and cell phones didn't exist. Harrison Ford was just making a name for himself in the Star Wars movies.

I quit my well-paid job ($250/week) as a bookkeeper in Hamilton to come to the farm. After the honeymoon I unpacked wedding gifts and watched through the window as the snow whipped across the front field. All I had to keep me busy was part-time work, and the only people we knew in this area were Jack's cousin and his wife. I took every excuse to go home and visit my mother, two hours away. But I kept in mind the idea of not putting God's plans asunder and trusted him to work things out.

Life improved the following year with a full-time job in the office of the local nursing home. It seemed half the townsfolk worked there and the other half had relatives in the home, so I got to know a lot of people. We became involved in church and met other couples our age. Jack took a part-time job in the school bus garage in town.

Mortgage woes

We visited the Farm Credit office and applied for a mortgage to build an addition onto the chicken barn. I put together the most optimistic financial projections I could. The man sat behind his desk and peered at Jack over his reading glasses. "These look pretty rosy," he said.

To our great surprise, he called the next day to let us know the loan had been approved. Construction began in the spring and continued into summer. I became painfully familiar with the term "cost overrun." The price of lumber and steel soared. At the same time, production in the broiler industry dropped.

On the day we gave the contractor his last cheque, notice from the marketing board arrived to inform us quota levels for the winter had been drastically reduced. Jack stapled up a plastic barrier in the barn and we used our new addition to store straw for the first six months. I wondered how we would meet the mortgage payments. But the Lord provided and before long we needed the extra space to accommodate increased production.

The 80s ushered in record high interest rates. Many farmers went bankrupt. We weathered the storm, thankful for the off-farm jobs we had to supplement our income.

Not out of the woods

Then I got pregnant. I planned to return to work after the baby was born, not wanting to sit at home and be bored, as I had been the first few months of our marriage. So the Lord sent twins – James and Stephanie. Being bored was no longer an issue. Neither was going back to work. Five years later we had Jessica.

We decided to send our children to Christian school. I wondered how we could afford it. But we did.

By the time we celebrated our tenth wedding anniversary we had started construction on a new house. The housing industry boomed that year. We paid interest on the mortgage for our new home while it sat half finished for three months, waiting for subcontractors to show up. We finally moved in at the beginning of February 1988.

That April, for the first time since we started farming, the accountant told us we owed income tax. In terms of income it had been a good year. But the building project ate up the extra cash. Things got even scarier when we experienced droughts for the following two summers and field crop yields were way down. Still, God was good.

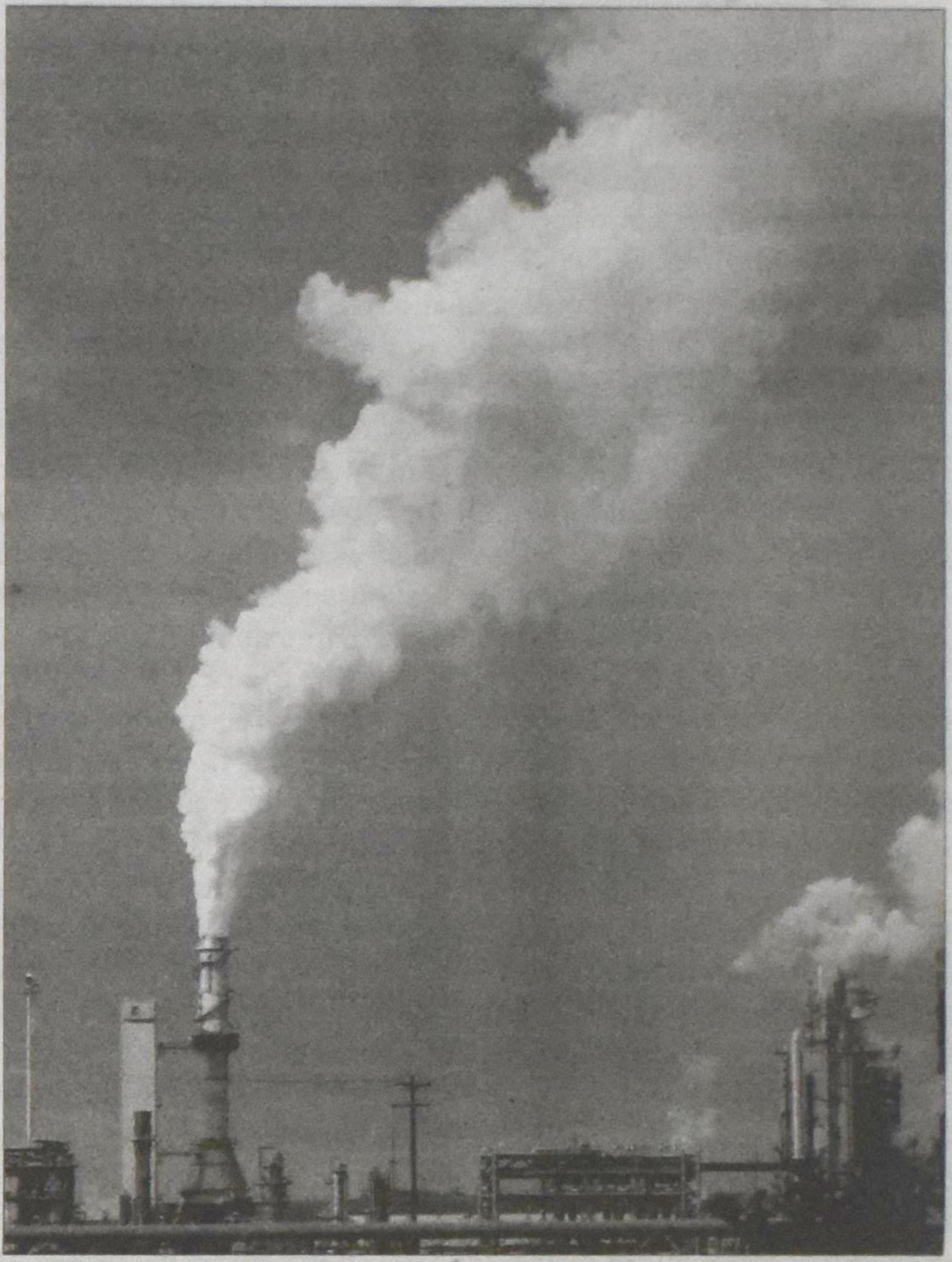
A better text

Today we have many happy memories of raising our kids in this house. Now it's just the two of us. Jack finished harvesting the soybeans this week and planted next year's wheat. There is much to be thankful for.

I wonder what the next three decades will hold. I'm not worried, though. Looking back a clear pattern emerges: life may have its ups and downs, but God never abandons us. If I could choose our wedding text over again, I'd probably pick Proverbs 3:5-6. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight," (NIV). Those sound like good words to live by as we continue traveling down this delightfully unpredictable road together.

Heidi VanderSlikke lives in Harriston, Ont. Her email: hmvanderslikke@ hotmail.com

Tar Sands *continued from page 1*



Smoke stacks in the oil sands

reinforced the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to environmental issues. Virtually all of today's chief environmental problems are generated by socio-economic and political institutions and actors. The environmental issues which we study as biological, chemical, ecological, or technical problems are virtually always produced by and embedded within complex economic and political processes.

To address this reality, we need strong natural scientific studies to be accompanied by and conducted within strong social, political, economic and interdisciplinary studies.

Oil sands Sabbath

Having a full sabbatical year to focus on studying the oil sands development boom was an enormous blessing. It was a gift of study, refreshment and renewal, as the Old Testament sabbatical teachings suggest. It allowed me to produce new fruits – insights, ideas, studies, and theories – for classroom use, community service, and publication. It also made me wonder whether, perhaps, the oil sands also need a Sabbath?

But what would that look like?

Well, perhaps its time to start the discussion! Maybe institutions such as The King's should set up an "Oil Sands Justice Initiative" on campus, a five-year, funded program that would enable Christian scholars, oil sands practitioners, students, interested Christian community supporters, and the churches in general, to discuss and act on this critical icon of globalization? This would provide the Christian community with a platform from which to engage this leading cultural development, based on in-depth research, rooted biblical reflection, and contemporary cultural analysis.

Dr. John Hiemstra is Professor of Political Studies, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, at the King's University College. If you are interested in looking into these themes further, one of John's papers is available in video form, and in a longer research paper format, at http://cpj.ca/otherwork/index.html?ap=1&x=119602.

Stewardship advice for congregations in a time of financial crisis

CHICAGO (ELCANS) – Autumn is often a time when congregations in many denominations are invited to make an annual financial pledge or estimate of giving to the church. But given the current economic downturn in the United States and many other countries, and uncertainly in Canada as well, it may be difficult for some church members to remain steadfast in giving as the Sunday morning offering plate travels across the pew.

"Financial downturns create uncertainty and fear," says Ed Kruse, director for stewardship for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. But he notes that "generosity has never been a matter of how much money we have."

Kruse offered advice for congregations who "want to grow a culture of generosity." Kruse's message to congregations is not to ignore the economic downturn and not to panic. "It's important for congregations and pastors to address financial factors in ways that do not escalate fear, nor as if we are wearing rose-colored glasses," he said.

Secondly, Kruse said, Christians may well have to transform spending habits. Congregations are well advised to review their entire spending plans as soon as possible, identify any "bad spending habits" and ask questions like, "Where is God in the decision-making process? What do we hear God saying to us?" Kruse added, "Or is God saying, 'Just trust me. I have been with you throughout your life, as a family and as a congregation. I'm not going to abandon you now.'"

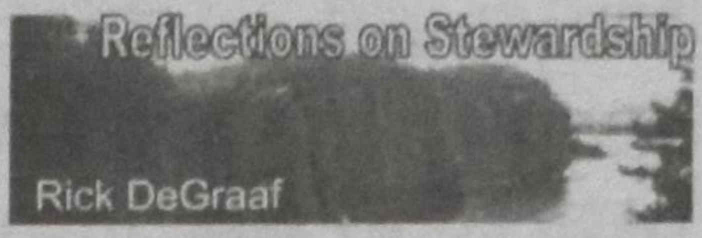
Although the spiritual message may be that "it's going to be OK," said Kruse, spirituality, reason, logic and "the math" suggest different things to different people.

"It's important to take people's anxiety seriously," he said. The financial downturn is also a good time to build a reserve for the future, said Kruse. "Is this a time to quit saving? Absolutely not; it's just the opposite. As a family, as a congregation, we can do that. That kind of thinking is not short-sighted. It's solid."

Another tip Kruse offered is staying on a percentage giving plan, such as tithing or proportional giving. When maintaining a percentage with lower income, the actual amount of money goes down, and that flows from our discipleship, our faith practice, he said. "There shouldn't be guilt if people need to make a decision to reduce their percentage of giving, because here the gospel trumps the law." Kruse said congregations are taking creative approaches to stewardship. One congregation decided to check in with members and listen to how the economic downturn is affecting them.

There are two principles that seem to be in operation, says Kruse. First, "What are the warnings that God is encouraging us to notice, without leading people to feel guilty, as we take corrective action or make mid-course corrections?" Second, how do we encourage continued generosity without sounding or being self-serving?"

"A reduction of income simply does not affect the spirit of generosity in one's heart," concluded Kruse. Christians "do not give because we have to but because we have grateful hearts to God in Christ."



About Legacies

Our dear friend and brother-in-Christ, Harry der Nederlanden, editor of the *Christian Courier*, has been called home. He leaves behind a big hole! We miss him. But even as we do, we celebrate and remember how God used Harry in so many ways to encourage us in our walk of life. It was a privilege to attend the memorial service for Harry and hear the many stories that were shared. Praise God for what he has done through the life of Harry der Nederlanden – his impact continues through the lives of all of us who treasure his legacy.

It must be the stage of life that I'm at, but I've attended many funerals in the past six months – including those of my mother, a best friend, and an uncle. Each time, however, I also experienced many blessings through the testimonies of their lives, just as I was blessed by the stories told at Harry's memorial service. The stories are so reassuring and affirming. Their lives are a testimony – a legacy. They join that "great cloud of witnesses" summarized in Hebrews 11 – the great crowd who have run life's journey. Their legacy encourages us also to run the race of life and to: *"...throw off everything that hinders and sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...."* (Hebrews 12: 1b, 2a)

As the author of Hebrews calls us to "fix our eyes on Jesus" so we, as stewards of all that God has entrusted to us, are also encouraged to think with the end in mind. Where are we headed? We need to ask ourselves the question – what will I be remembered for? What will the epitaph be on my tombstone? What will be my legacy?

I have a pegboard on which I usually pin things that I need to take care of – like bills and, as well, things of interest that I come across. Some time ago, I took notes of some article that I read – I don't remember where. Here's what I wrote on that note: Many 95-year-olds were surveyed and asked what, if they could have their life over again, they would do differently? Many answered that they would reflect more; risk more; and do more of the things that live on after they have died – a lot of little things done with great love.

When talking with older people, I've found that many live with regrets; they wish they had done some things differently. Then when I look back at my own life, I realize I have my own regrets too. Time doesn't allow us to go back to correct our mistakes. We might wish we could do that like some adventurers in a time-traveler TV show, going back to correct a mistake that changed history. No! That is not possible for us. But there is another way – we need to forgive and learn from our mistakes, even as we live with the consequences.

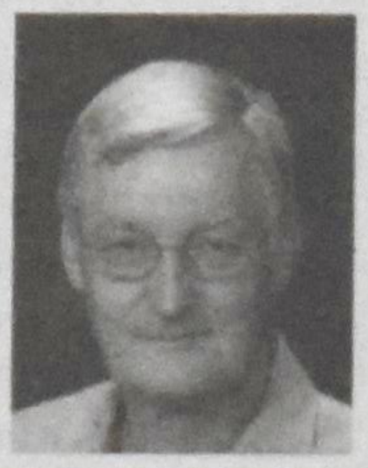
Just as the writer of Hebrews calls us to "fix our eyes on Jesus," so we should look ahead and keep the end goal in mind. Like a farmer making that first pass down the centre of the field – we need to look straight ahead and drive toward a single target point if we want a straight furrow. We need to be busy doing things that have a central focus. Having our eyes focused on Jesus, means doing things that matter and really make a difference for the Kingdom. As the 95-year-olds tell us – do more of what they said they would if they could do it over again: reflect more, risk more (for Jesus' sake), and do more things that live on. Nothing lives on like the Kingdom of God!

May it be said of me, may it be said of you: "Yes, this person was a person of faith, a Christ-like example of a person who did his or her best to convey a genuine love for God and fellow human beings. His or her legacy as a child of God who loved greatly and served willingly is an example of a servant who diligently strove to serve as Jesus would." It is a legacy of Christian stewardship in its fullest sense.

Stewardly tip: Legacy in a Will. A Will is an important document – one in which you leave instructions on what to do with your estate. It is also a testimony of what is important to you. Consider the charities/ministries that you love and supported with your giving while you were living and leave a gift in your Will that sends a clear message to your surviving loved ones – that these causes were important to you. It is part of your legacy.

Readers: Share your "Stewardly tips" so that we all can make better use of the resources God has entrusted to us. Submit your suggestions (by mail to *Christian Courier* or by email to my address below) and provide your contact information so that we can acknowledge your contribution or ask you for more details.

Next issue: Reviewing and reflecting



Rick DeGraaf works for Christian Stewardship Services in Markham, Ontario
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Church

'CityReacher' New Testaments present gospel geared to specific cities

Pittsburgh residents get the message

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colorado (IBS-STL) – Approximately 180,000 residents of the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania area awoke on Sunday, September 7, to find a gift from their community enfolded in their *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* newspaper. Enclosed was a Pittsburgh-specific New Testament containing images of their city, a local history and testimonies from area residents.

The CityReachers New Testament was distributed through donations from Pittsburgh's Christian and civic leaders and residents. The portable, user-friendly format includes a guide to reading the Bible. Area churches and volunteers are delivering another 40,000 New Testaments to residents who do not receive the local newspaper.

The "CityReachers" New Testament in the New International Version (*NIV*) was created by the International Bible Society, a division of IBS-STL Global. The IBS began in 1815 as the New York Bible Society, eventually became international, and last year merged with the British organization Send the Light (STL). Its mission is to "advance the Kingdom of God through translating, producing, and distributing Bibles, Scripture materials, and other Christian resources so people around the world may become disciples of Jesus Christ." IBS-STL is one of the largest Bible and Christian literature ministries in the world. It is the translation sponsor of the English-language NIV, the most widely read contemporary English translation.

'Awesome idea'

Many cities are beginning to realize again that spiritual values are an essential component for fighting crime and moral decay in their communities. The Bible provides the powerful message of hope and life-change through salvation in Jesus Christ. CityReachers New Testaments speak to readers through the clear, easy-to-read prose of the New International Version.

"This was an awesome idea … handing out Bibles with the newspaper," wrote one Pittsburgh resident. "It inspired me to join up with a church and become active again."

This year, IBS-STL has distributed more than ahalf-million CityReachers New Testaments in selected cities in different parts of the U.S. A second distribution is planned within the next year for homes in the Virginia Peninsula and Philadelphia. Distribution is also planned for South Florida and Fort Worth, Texas.

IBS-STL launched CityReachers in 2004. To date, more than 1 million New Testaments have been distributed in Brampton, Ontario; Colorado Springs; the Colorado River Valley (Arizona, California, and Nevada); Houston; Jackson, Mississippi; the Virginia Peninsula; Philadelphia; Spokane, Washington; and Pittsburgh.

"My City, My God," – IBS-STL produced city-specific New Testament for teens

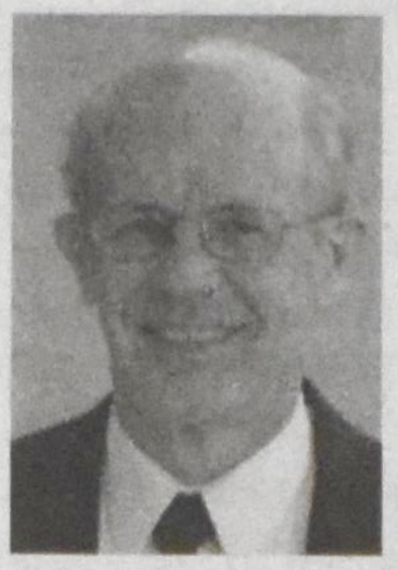
Methodist pastor uncovers John Wesley's advice on the economy

Marian Van Til

WHITE PLAINS, NY – A retired Methodist pastor and director of the Commission on United Methodist Men says that John Wesley, the 18th century's great evangelical reformer and the inadvertent founder of Methodism, has advice for our world's current economic trauma.

John Wesley preaching to poor and rich alike

In an October 16 online commentary <www.umc.org> J. Richard Peck noted that Wesley addressed a letter to the editor of *Lloyd's Evening Post* in 1772 regarding the "causes and cures for high unemployment, food shortages and dismal economic conditions." More than two centuries later, the diminishing economies around the world "would scarcely rival" that of England in the 1770s, Peck observed.



J. Richard Peck

Wesley was 69 at the time. His question to the *Evening Post* editor was: "Why are thousands of people starving – perishing for want, in every part of England?" – and he answered his own question.

Wesley described the poverty he saw in his ministry in the streets of London: "I have known those who could only afford to eat a little coarse food every other day. I have known one picking up stinking sprats [herring-like fish] from a dunghill, and carrying them home for herself and her children. I have known another gathering the bones, which the dogs had left in the streets, and making broth of them, to prolong a wretched life."

Five practices that needed changing

Wesley concluded that the impoverished state of ordinary people in his nation was caused by five practices – wasteful, greedy or unjust – that needed to changed. His concerns are of a type that do not sound unfamiliar.

First, in Wesley's view, much grain that should have been used for food was being turned into alcohol, the abuse of which was responsible for many societal ills. He wrote, "Have we not reason to believe that half of the wheat produced in the kingdom is every year consumed, not by so harmless a way as throwing it into the sea, but by converting it into deadly poison – poison that naturally destroys, not only the strength and life, but also the morals of our countrymen."

Secondly, there was a similar problem regarding the raising of horses instead of cattle, milk cows, sheep or oxen. Horses, *per se*, were not a problem, and they were needed for transportation. But wealthy people wanted them in large numbers for sport, pleasure and for export to France and other countries – and horses began to be raised in place of food animals which would benefit far greater numbers of people.

Wesley observed, "Most of the considerable farmers, particularly in the northern counties, who used to breed large numbers of sheep or horned cattle, and frequently both, no longer trouble themselves with either sheep, or cows, or oxen; as they can turn their land to far better account, by breeding horses alone. Such is the demand, not only for coach and chaise horses, which are bought and destroyed in incredible numbers; but much more for bred horses, which are yearly exported by hundreds, year thousands, to France."

Wesley's third concern was again of a similar type. Peck sums up Wesley's observation, "Unproductive large farms had replaced small family farms, causing a shortage of poultry, pork and eggs." Wesley put it like this: "Every one of these little farmers kept a few swine, with some quantity of poultry; and, having little money, was glad to send his bacon, or pork, or fowls and eggs, to market continually. Hence, the markets were plentifully served, and plenty created cheapness; but, at present, the great, the gentlemen farmers, are above attending to these little things. They breed no poultry or swine, unless for their own use; consequently they send none to market."

Fourthly, Wesley was concerned about "enormous taxes" being laid on "almost everything that can be named." (Goods, not income, were the main source of tax revenue, and those "goods" included even the earth's elements, Wesley wryly noted.) "Not only abundant taxes are raised from earth, and fire, and water," said Wesley, "but, in England, the ingenious statesmen have found a way to tax light. Only one element – air – remains, and surely some man of honor will contrive to tax this also. For how long shall the saucy air blow in the face of a gentleman, nay, a lord, without paying for it?"

Wesley's final concern was England's national debt. "Taxes are high because of the national debt. I have heard that the national expense, in the time of peace, was, sixty years ago, three million a year. Now the bare interest of the public debt amounts to above four million. To raise which, with the other expenses of government, those taxes are absolutely necessary."

Tax those who can afford it, conserve resources

Wesley's means of cure for this situation was not one to warm the hearts of many a capitalist today. Peck points out that he wished "to repress 'luxury, either by example, by laws, or both.' He asked legislators to establish laws that would prohibit the distillation of alcohol. While he lamented high taxes upon the poor and middle class, he called for additional taxes on luxury items such as horses and carriages. He suggested people be taxed on what they purchased rather than upon what they earned." And Wesley's concern about the national debt was not only for the present, but a concern for future generations.

In short, says Peck, "Wesley called for higher taxes upon the wealthy and laws that would prohibit the wasting of natural products" – better stewardship of the resources God has given us in the earth..

Modesty being one mark of a gentleman, Wesley did not tell the readers of *Lloyd's Evening Post* about his own work for public justice, which he saw as a part of living the Gospel.

He regularly sent groups of his followers to visit and help sustain poor people in the London workhouses. Wesley and his Methodists also preached to and worshiped with the Gospel to workhouse inmates, the majority of whom were children and elderly persons.

Peck asserts that contemporary application of Wesley's advice would suggest that lawmakers in wealthy countries like the U.S. should "reduce taxes on the poor and middle class, add taxes to luxury items, eliminate taxes upon necessities, introduce laws that govern the use of natural resources and take steps to reduce the national debt" (in the American case, now $10-trillion).

Peck draws one other conclusion from Wesley's personal life. "Using his own life as an example, Wesley also would suggest less reliance upon pharmaceuticals. While he experimented with alternative health practices, he rose each morning at 4 o'clock and relied heavily on an active life style. He lived to age 88."

India: Violence against Christians in Orissa continues unabated

Hindu extremists want Hindu state by annihilating Christians

ORISSA, India (BF) – Hindu extremist violence against the Christian community in Orissa State, India, which started on August 24 (see CC, Sept. 8), has continued almost unabated since then.

Christian orphanage bombed by extremists

At least 50 Christians have been murdered, some cut to pieces and others burnt alive. Many fear that the death toll is even higher, with one estimate suggesting that 120 Christians have been killed. About 18,000 people have been injured, many of them severely; numerous Christian women have been raped; some 4,400 homes have been destroyed; 300 villages have been cleansed of all Christians; and several orphanages and hundreds of churches and church buildings have been torched and razed. Relief camps, where Christians have fled for safety and shelter, have been attacked and drinking water has been poisoned.

Over 50,000 Christians are thought to be homeless, and around 30,000, more than half of them children, are hiding in the jungle, many without any food and water. Starvation is a very real danger for many of them, especially for the children, the elderly and the sick. Christians wanting to return to their homes have been told by the Hindu extremists, "Come back as Hindu or don't come back at all." Many who dare to return to their villages are forcibly converted to Hinduism. Sometimes the Hindu extremists pour petrol over the Christians and then ask them to convert; if they refuse they will be burnt.

Government inaction 'deeply disturbing'

And still the government seems afraid to act. Although there has been talk of banning the Bajrang Dal, one of the Hindu nationalist groups responsible for the gruesome acts, and of imposing presidential rule over Orissa, no action has been taken. Additional police and a helicopter have been sent to the area, which has helped to improve conditions in at least some districts, but officials still advise journalists and members of NGOs (non-governmental organisations) not to go into the affected areas as they cannot provide protection.

"The sheer scale of the ongoing anti-Christian violence in Orissa, and the reluctance of federal, state and local authorities to act and protect the Christians is a serious and deeply disturbing development in Indian society," says Dr Patrick Sookhdeo, international director of the Barnabas Fund. "The Indian Christian community, not only in Orissa but also in other Indian states, is facing one of its worst crises. The attempt by Hindu extremists to turn India into a Hindu state and drive out Christianity by whatever means must be stopped. We must stand and pray with our brothers and sisters through this dark time, and offer them all the help we can."

Barnabas Fund is helping

The Barnabas Fund is currently helping to get emergency aid to the Christians worst affected by the violence. The Barnabus is one of several Christian agencied/missions dedicated to serving the suffering church, to making their needs known to Christians around the world and to encouraging those Christians to pray for the sufferers.

Thousands of Christians in and around Orissa are in urgent need of food, medical help, clothes, blankets and temporary shelter. It costs $43 (US) to provide one family with a food parcel of rice, lentils and cooking oil, which is sufficient for at least a month. A major concern is that winter is coming and Christians hiding in forests, and refugees in other places, are ill-equipped to face rain and cold weather.

The Barnabus Fund hopes to provide temporary shelter of a reasonable standard. The next stage will be to help with rebuilding houses and churches and to enable Christians who have lost their livelihoods to become self sufficient.

The organization urges Christians in the West to pray for fellow believers in Orissa and the other Indian states where anti-Christian violence is continuing on an unprecedented scale. It asks urgent prayer for those who are facing attempts to force them to convert to Hinduism; that the Indian government will take action and do everything it can to end to the anti-Christian violence that is spreading through the country; and that help will quickly reach those in desperate need. "Pray for all the Christians inside and outside the country working together to help believers in Orissa, that the Lord will guide and protect them," urges the Barnabas Fund.

Eastern Orthodox recommit themselves to mending internal conflict, dialoguing with other Christians

ISTANBUL, Turkey (WCC) – Patriarchs, primates and representatives of Eastern Orthodox churches recommitted themselves to overcoming intra-Orthodox conflicts as well as to continue theological dialogues with Christians from other confessions at a meeting in Istanbul, Turkey, two weeks ago.

"Overcoming the internal conflicts of the Orthodox Church through the surrendering of nationalistic, ethnic and ideological extremes of the past" is a requisite for the "word of Orthodoxy [to] have a necessary impact on the contemporary world," reads a message issued at the end of the meeting.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

The message also affirms the participants' "desire to continue, despite any difficulties, the theological dialogues with other Christians, as well as the interreligious dialogues, especially with Judaism and Islam."

Fourteen patriarchs, primates and representatives of Eastern Orthodox churches gathered in the Phanar, the see of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. The meeting took place at the invitation and under the presidency of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

"This has been an extremely important event in the life of the Orthodox church," said World Council of Churches (WCC) deputy general secretary Georges Lemopoulos. "The message, calling mainly for inter-orthodox unity and collaboration, and spelling out an 'Orthodox agenda' as a witness to the world, has a significant ecumenical dimension and will certainly impact the work of the ecumenical movement," added Lemopoulos, an Orthodox layperson from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Condemning 'unjust inequality'

Addressing some of the issues making headlines these days, the message linked the current financial crisis to "manic profiteering" and "corrupt financial activity," while calling for a "viable economy" able to combine "efficacy with justice and social solidarity."

Regarding the conflict between Georgia and Russia over the breakaway South Ossetia region, the Orthodox leaders commended both Orthodox churches for "their fraternal cooperation" and hoped that their "efforts will contribute to overcoming the tragic consequences of military operations and [to] the swift reconcilement of the peoples."

The meeting's message condemned the "unjust inequality" in the sharing of "the goods of Creation" by "individuals, or even peoples" as a consequence of "nationalistic, ethnic, ideological and religious" divisions. The results, it said, "are wanton: billions of people deprived of basic goods; mass migration; nationalistic, religious and social discrimination and conflicts; and destruction of the natural environment and the entire ecosystem."

As Orthodox Christians "share responsibility for the contemporary crisis of this planet," they also have "a major obligation to contribute to overcoming the divisions of the world," the message states.

Participants at the gathering welcomed a proposal to convene pan-Orthodox consultations within the coming year in order to address jurisdictional and other issues that have "arisen from historical circumstances and pastoral requirements, such as in the so-called Orthodox Diaspora."

The Orthodox leaders also welcomed the continuation of preparations for the "Holy and Great Council." Preparations towards a major conciliar event of the Orthodox churches took place at the end of the '70s and in the '80s but slowed down when changes in Eastern Europe created new pastoral needs and ecclesial challenges within the Orthodox world.

God's Word has a political dimension that is antidote to nihilism, relativism, say Catholic cardinals

VATICAN (CWNews.com) – When the Roman Catholic Synod of Bishops recently discussed "The Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church," two influential cardinals underlined the political impact of the Scriptures.

Cardinal Antonio Maria Rouco Varela of Madrid, Spain, whose country has witnessed a radical shift toward liberal policies on abortion, divorce, same-sex marriage, and embryo research, said that the modern era has "augmented the negative aspects of the modern concept of man, of society and of the political-juridical order, opening the way to existential nihilism and to the dictatorship of ethical relativism." The Spanish prelate added, "The legal approach to the right to life – as if the state could dispose of it in an unlimited way – is eloquent proof of this." The Word of God is an antidote to this attitude, he said.

The president of the Italian bishops' conference, Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco of Genoa, said that if Catholic believers can gain a better understanding of the relationship between Scripture and church tradition, they will "achieve a better understanding of the great questions of birth and death, family and freedom, love and natural law, euthanasia, fertilization, etc., and know also how to present them to non-believers for whom the Bible is valid only for the force of its arguments."

Cardinal Bagnasco continued, "When the church speaks of these themes she is not meddling, she is not going beyond her evangelizing mission.... At the same time, she serves cultures and societies so that they may become more human."

Archbishop Paul Cremona of Malta offered a different perspective on the public impact of the Gospel message. Speaking of societies that have maintained at least part of their traditional Catholic identity, the archbishop said. "Many of our faithful still live in nostalgia of, and compare the present situation with, the model of the [Roman Catholic] Church that was present 30 to 40 years ago. Since the Catholic Church has not remained in a privileged position as it was then, they live in an atmosphere of shock when the church or its pastors are challenged. Many times they stand in fear of speaking openly before this, many times, hostile culture."

What is required to break out of that is that Catholics (and other Christians) "need to go out of this traumatic experience to enter into a new evangelization" in a changed and highly secular world, said the Archbishop.

Reviews

Children's books for Christmas

The following children's books were reviewed by Sonya VanderVeen.

Humpty Dumpty

by Etienne Delessert (Houghton Mifflin, 2006)

In this unique retelling of an old tale, King Humpty Dumpty builds walls around his personal, luxurious kingdom in order to keep the poor peasants out. One day the peasants peek over the wall, curious to see what exists on the other side. Furious, King Humpty Dumpty dismisses his guards and servants, and sets out on his own to build a higher wall. But, as the nursery rhyme goes, he had a great fall. This thought-provoking picture book explores how walls are used to separate the rich and the poor, to the detriment of both groups. While reading this book to their children, parents may find opportunities to talk to them about God's love for all people, no matter who they are or how much they own.

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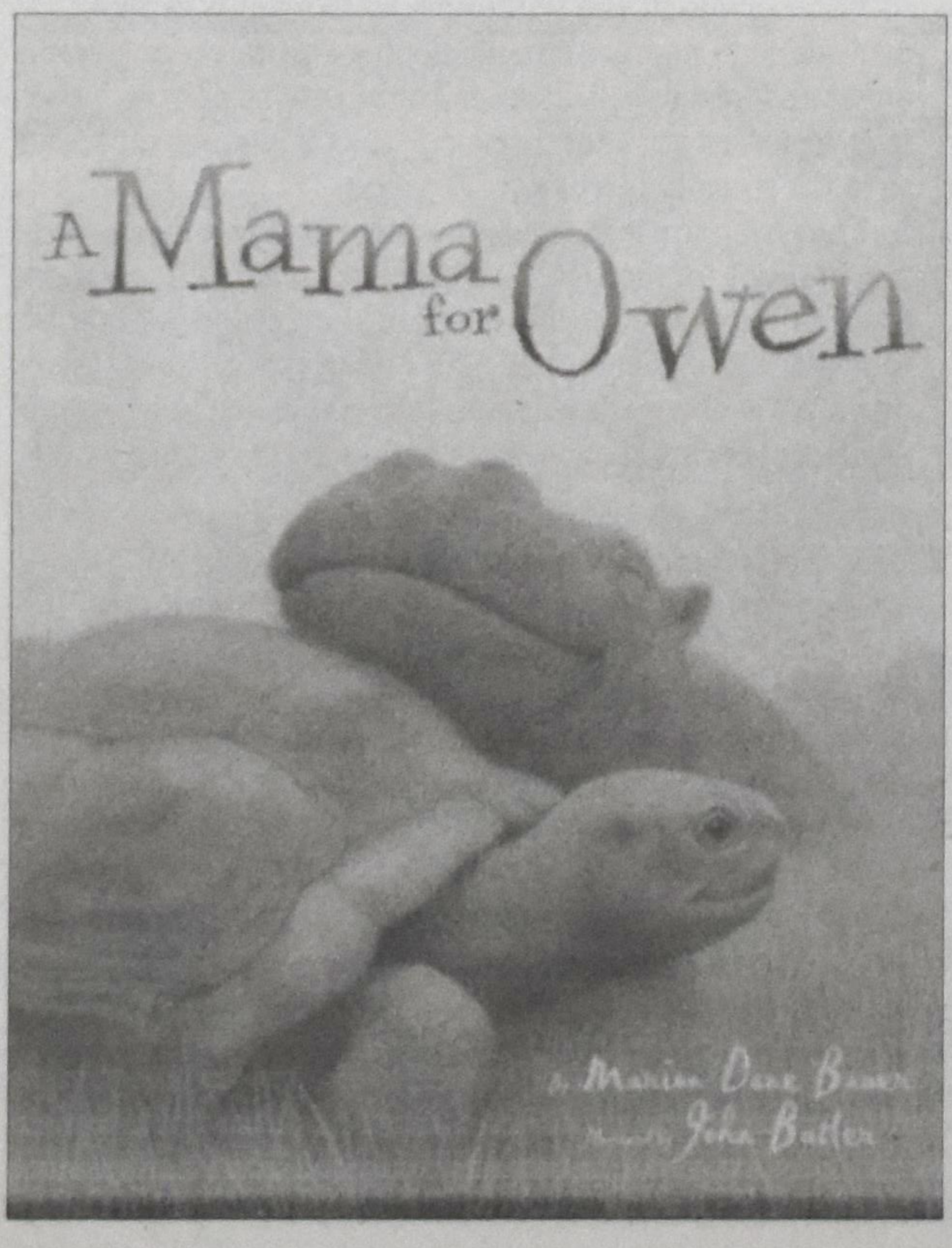
A Mama for Owen

by Marion Dane Bauer. Illustrated by John Butler (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2007)

Owen, the hippo, lives with his family in the Sabaki River in Africa. When torrential rain causes the river to rise, Owen is swept out to sea and loses his family forever. A tsunami wave sweeps Owen onto another shore. Lost and disoriented, he bonds with an old tortoise, who reminds him of his mother in surprising and reassuring ways. This endearing tale, based on an event that took place in Kenya after the tsunami of 2004, will reassure young readers that, even in desperate situations, hope can be found.



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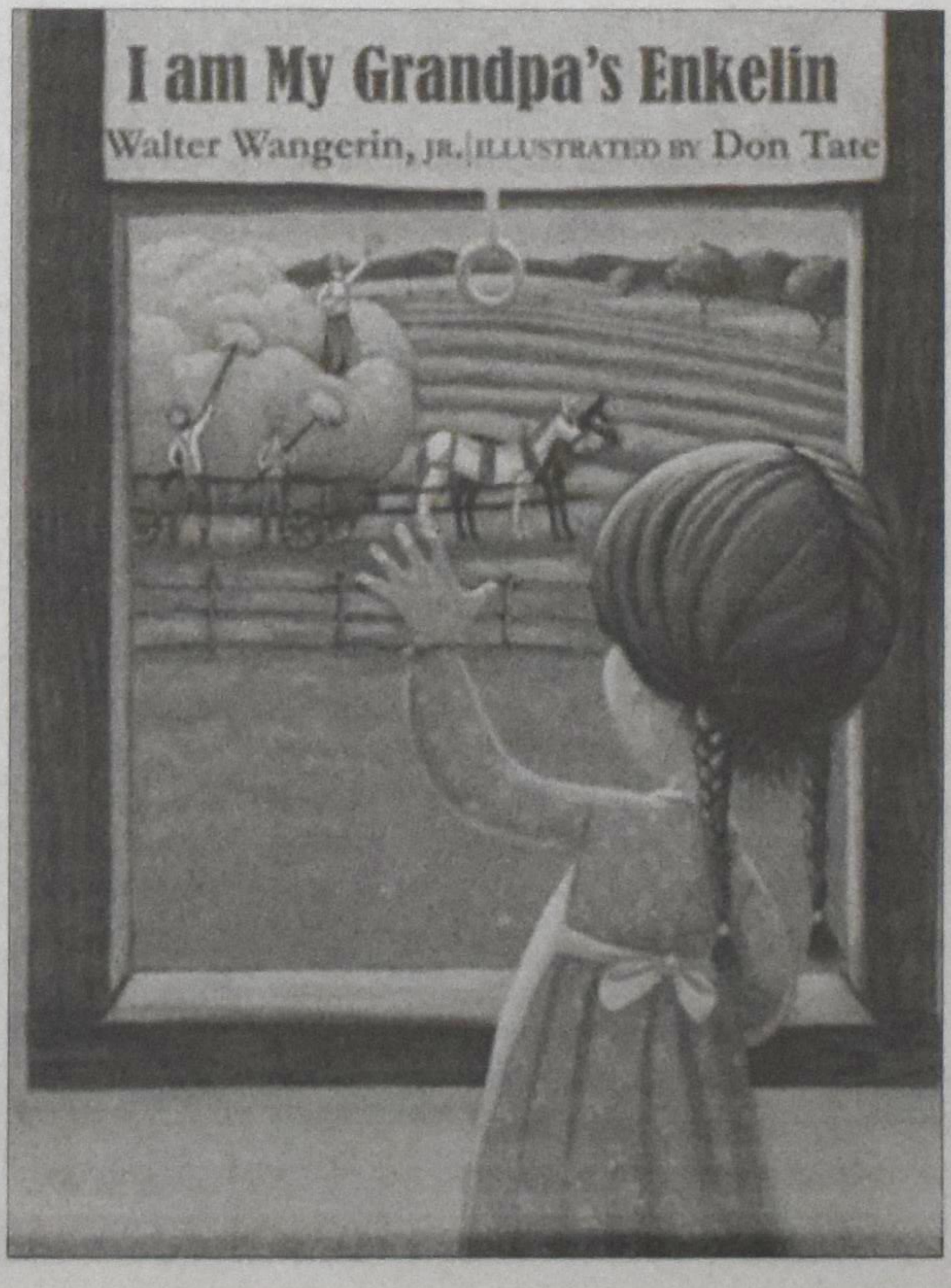
I Am My Grandpa's Enkelin

by Walter Wangerin, Jr. Illustrated by Don Tate (Paraclete Press, 2007)

Grandpa's love for his young granddaughter (*Enkelin*, in German), who visits him through the seasons on a Midwestern farm, shape her character as she grows into adulthood. Grandpa's stories, songs, work ethic, faith, and prayers, teach his *Enkelin* about the sacredness of human life, creation, and God the Creator. Once when she is lost, and then found, Grandpa movingly prays, "Lord, I will not always be nearby to find *mein Enkelin* when she is lost, stay with her. Be to her the hen that gathers her chicks to her bosom at night." When Grandpa dies, his *Enkelin* realizes the depth of her love for him and the loss that she feels. However, she doesn't despair because she knows that Grandpa will live eternally. Wangerin's poignant tale and Don Tate's vivid illustrations will capture the imaginations of both adults and children.



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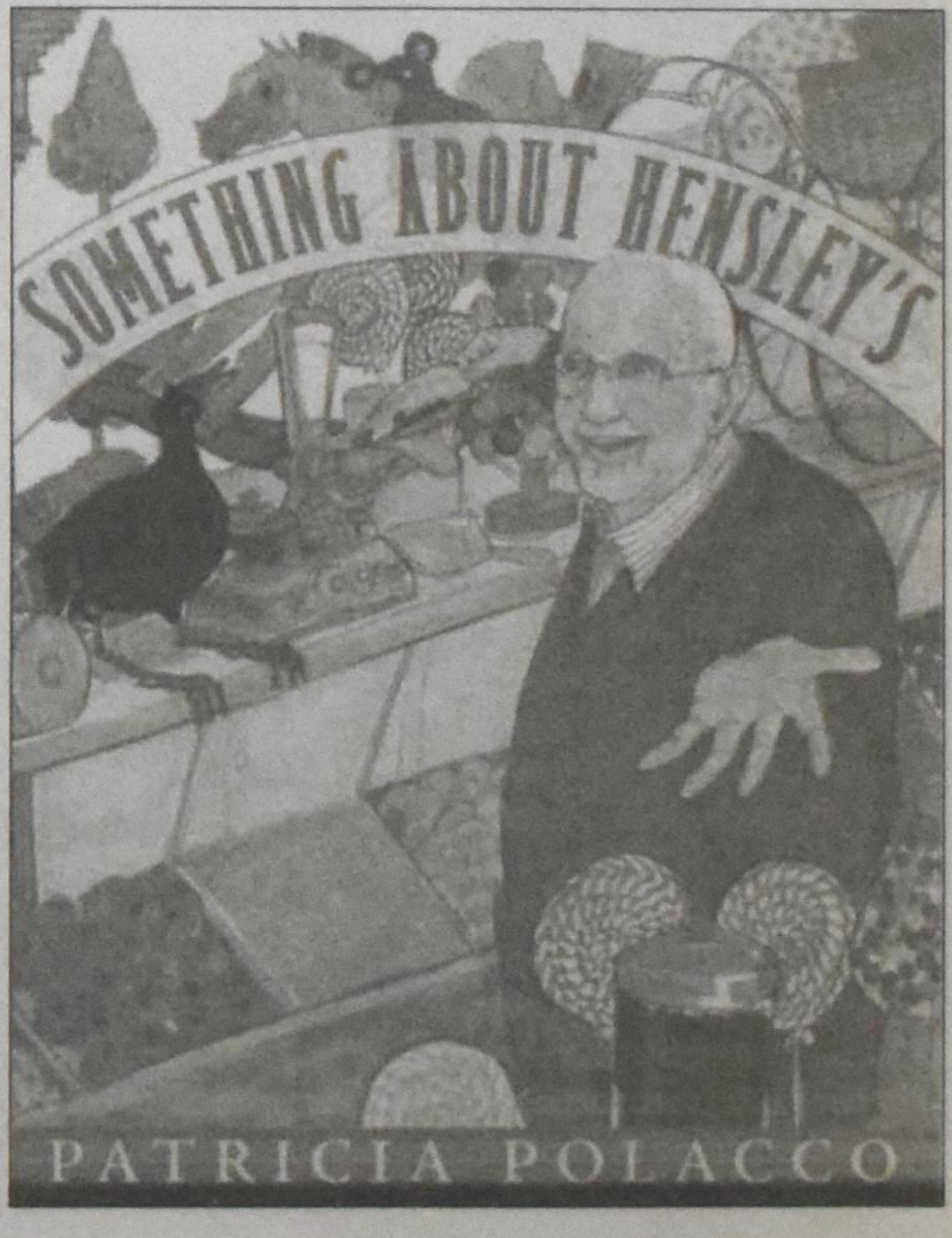
Something About Hensley's

by Patricia Polacco (Philomel Books, 2006)

Old John Soncrant runs Hensley's, a general store. Warm and comforting, Old John always has exactly what his clients need. When two girls, who are new to town, visit his store, Old John encourages them to drop by often. Kate and Molly do just that. As he gets to know them, Old John realizes that there's more to their story than meets the eye. One day while in the store with her single mom, Molly has an asthma attack. Old John bargains with a doctor – who happens to be present at the time – to care for Molly at no cost. As well, the versatile storekeeper seems to know, and be able to supply, everything else Kate, Molly, and their mother need. Patricia Polacco's heartwarming tale, replete with energetic, emotion-packed illustrations, celebrates kindness, creative solutions, and generosity.



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We Three Kings

illustrated by Gennady Spirin (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2007)

Written in 1857, the Christmas carol, *We Three Kings of Orient Are*, tells the story of three great kings who journey to find Jesus so that they can bring their gifts to him and worship him. Internationally renowned artist

Reviews

Gennady Spirin worshipfully brings the carol's text to life with lavish illustrations of angels, animals, humans, and nature declaring the praises of the newborn King. Myriads of intricate details make this book a feast for the eyes.

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You Were Loved Before You Were Born

by Eve Bunting. Illustrated by Karen Barbour
(The Blue Sky Press, 2008)

This simply illustrated story assures a child that she was loved before her birth, and explains how that love was expressed. Her grandmother planted a rosebush, her grandfather provided a rocking chair, cousins offered second-hand clothes, a neighbor made a butterfly kite, and many others did their part. When the child was born, love continued to be showered on her life. Bunting's celebrative story – with the subtle confirmation that the fetus is a human being – affirms life from conception onward.

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An Orange in January

by Dianna Hutts Aston. Illustrated by Julie Maren
(Dial Books for Young Readers, 2007)

What's so special about an orange? It begins as a blossom, is pollinated by bees, and then begins to grow steadily. Soil, rain, and sunshine contribute to its growth. But without a human hand to pick it, to place it in a basket, to transport it from a southern to a northern climate, and to sell it in a grocery store, a child would never have the opportunity to pull back its pungent peel, take the segments apart, and share it with friends. This deceptively simple picture book celebrates the complexity of nature, the contribution of many working hands in the transport of food worldwide, and the joy of sharing simple gifts amongst racially diverse people.

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For Me?

by Harmen van Straaten (NorthSouth Books, 2007)

Duck and his friends, Toad, Otter, and Hedgehog, each receive a mysterious envelope containing a red rose and an unsigned sheet of paper with a large heart on it. As the friends discuss where the envelopes could have come from, their relationships become strained because each hopes that the letters' creator was declaring love for him or her, and not for the others who received them. However, to everyone's surprise, the letters aren't love letters. Instead, they are messages from shy, lonely Mole who is longing for friends. The animals put their differences aside and each contributes something to make Mole feel welcomed. Van Straaten's endearing tale and simply sketched animals portray the value and beauty of friendship.

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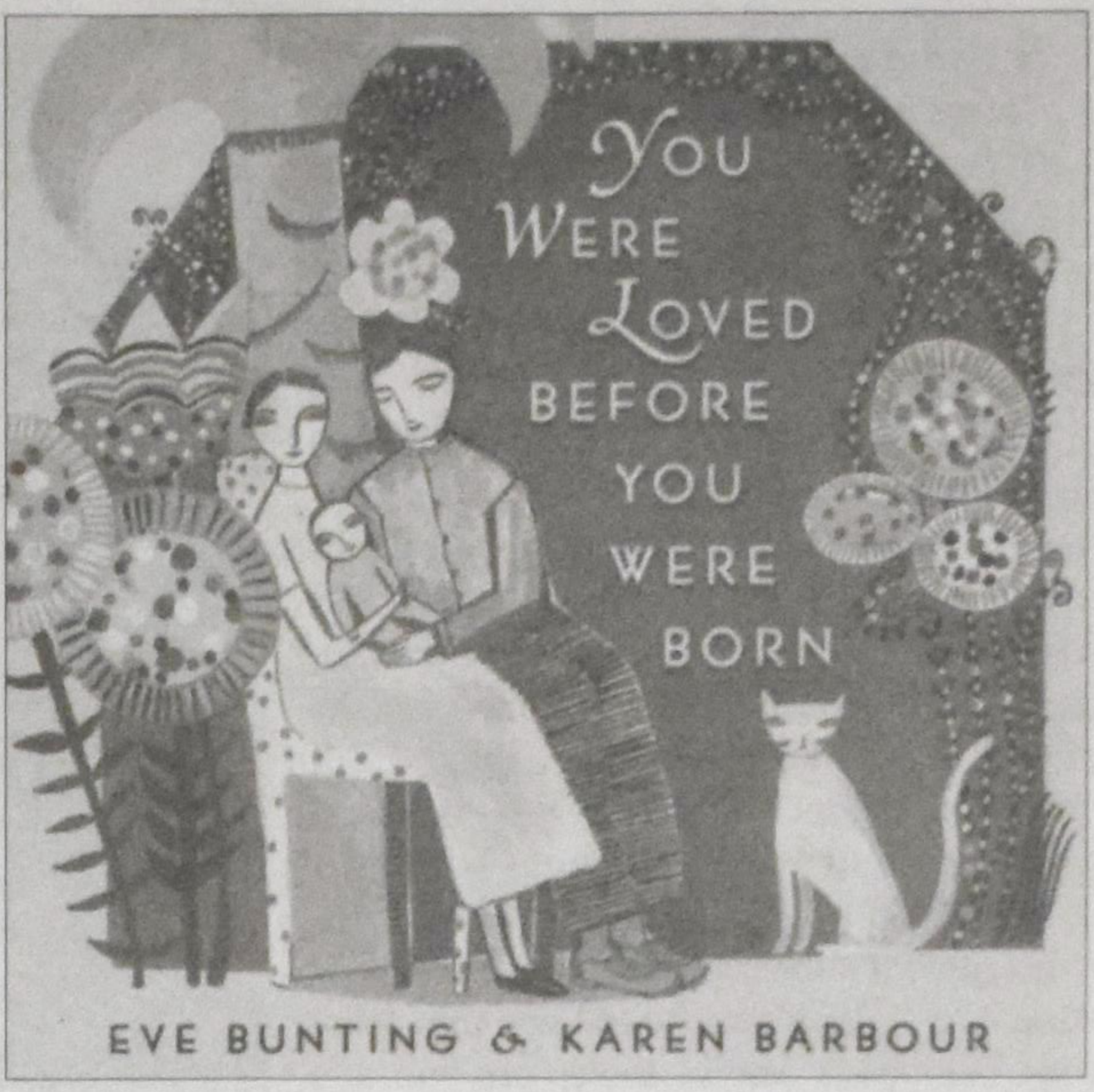
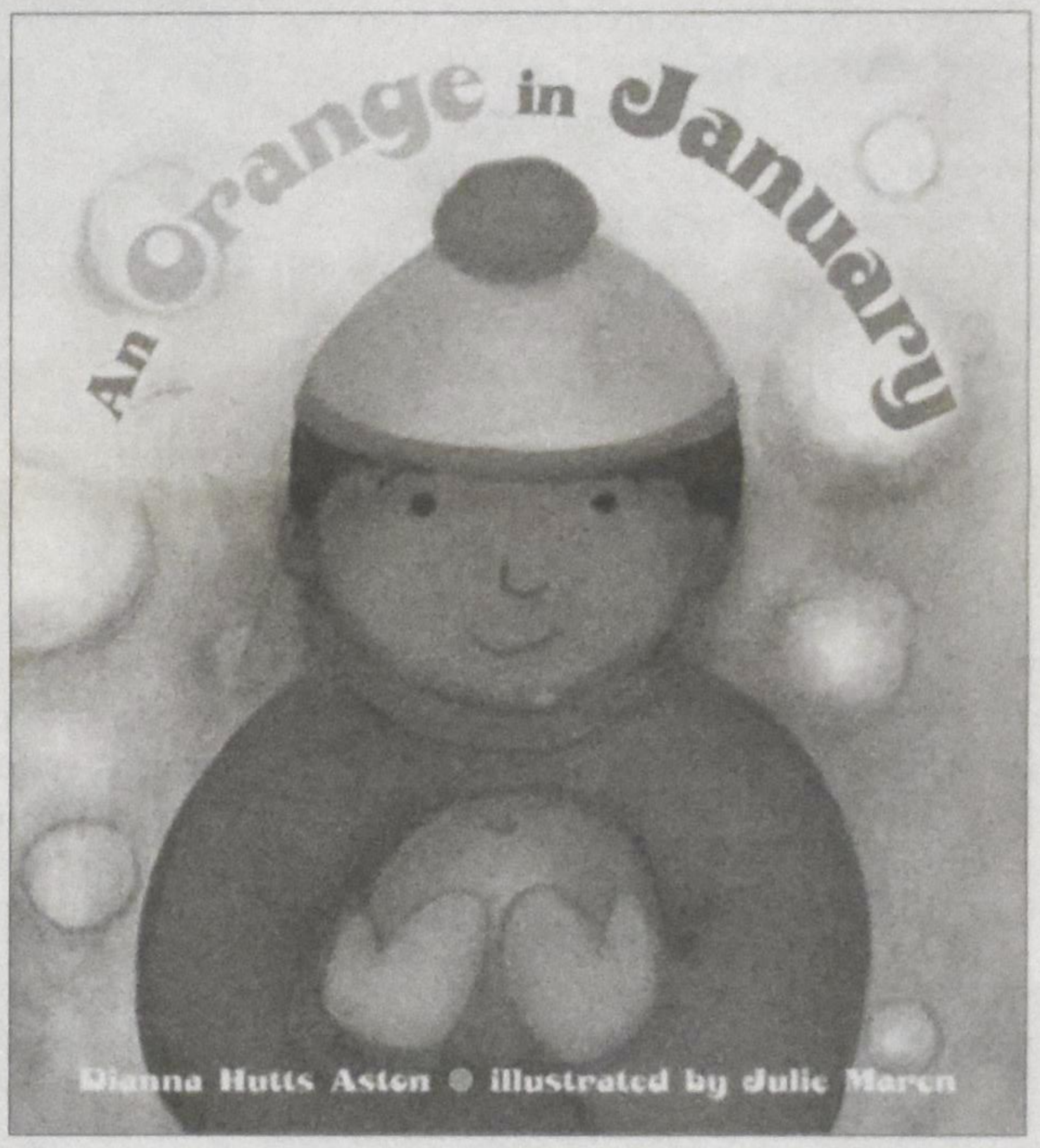
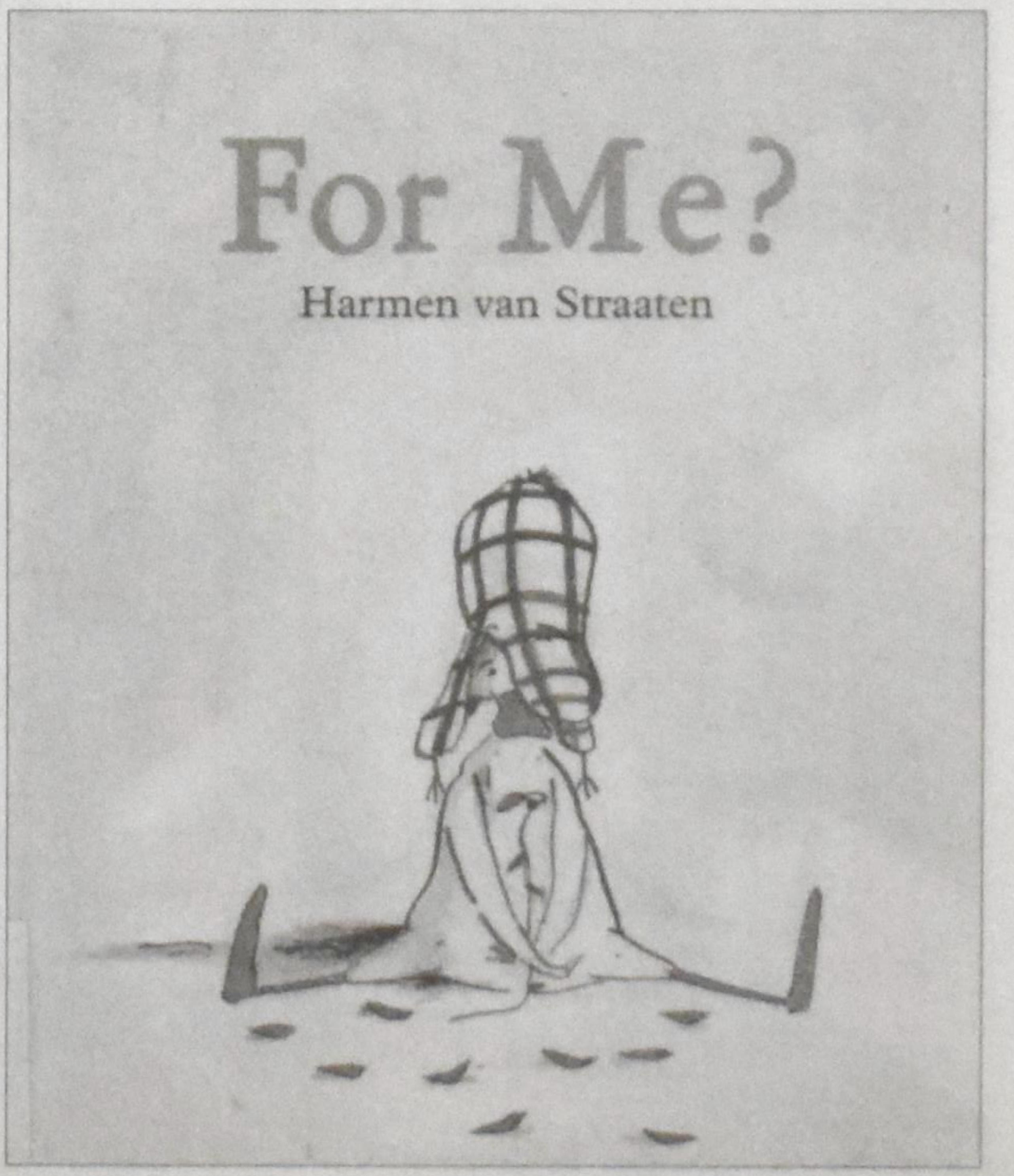
Oh, Brother!

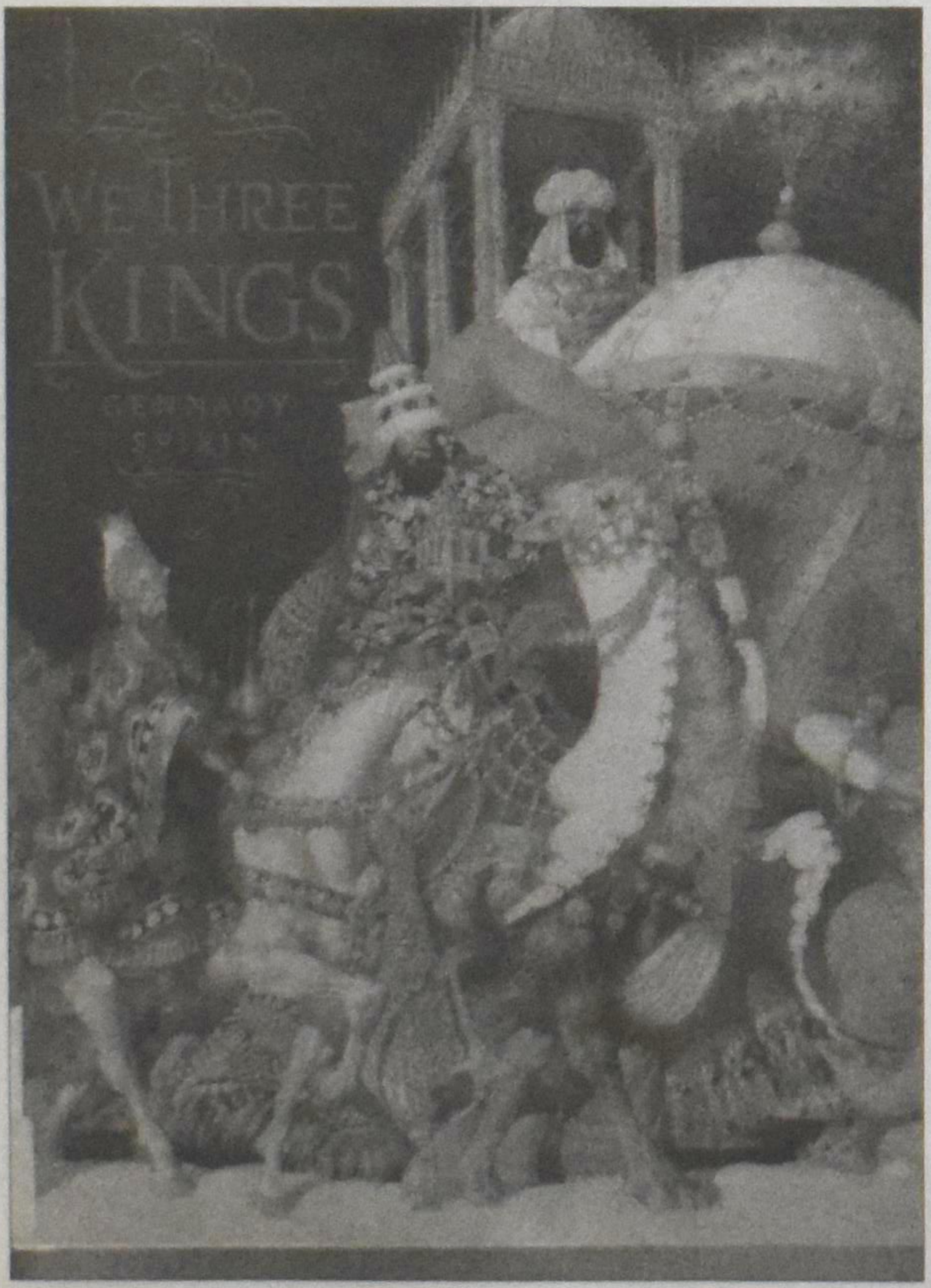
by Nikki Grimes. Illustrated by Mike Benny
(HarperCollins Publishers, 2008)

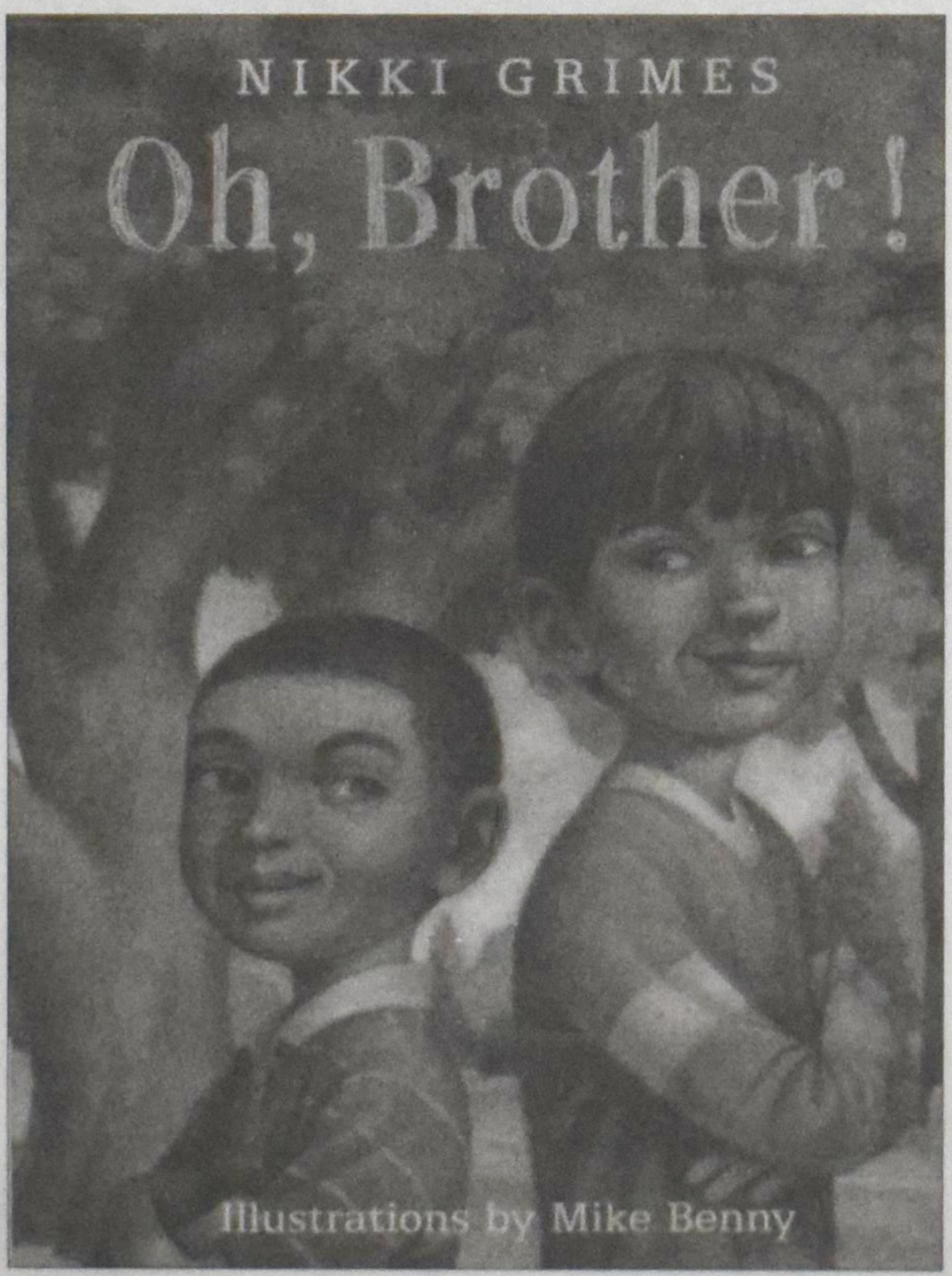
Two boys discover that becoming members of a blended family can be difficult under the best of circumstances. As tensions rise between them, a showdown is inevitable. But slowly and tentatively the stepbrothers begin to enjoy each other's company. The news that a baby will be born into their family creates an unexpected bond between the boys. When their sister is born, the stepbrothers acknowledge each other as brothers. In twenty poems, Nikki Grimes captures the reality of many of today's families, and offers hope for new beginnings.











Art

The artist as prophet: Peter Reitsma's "falling into grace"

"In that day the wolf and the lamb will live together; the leopard will lie down with the baby goat. The calf and the yearling will be safe with the lion. . . ."

Isaiah 11:6-9

Chris Cuthill

One of my favourite movies of all time is *Network*, which follows TV news anchorman Howard Beale. His ratings on a fictional, fourth-rated TV network called UBS have slipped and he is about to get fired. In an act of desperation, Beale announces in the middle of his news monologue that he will "blow his brains out" on his program next week – so "tune in!" The ratings soar.

Some of Beale's ensuing speeches resonate with our contemporary socio-economic situation: "I don't have to tell you things are bad. Everybody knows things are bad. It's a depression. Everybody's out of work or scared of losing their job. The dollar buys a nickel's worth; banks are going bust; shopkeepers keep a gun under the counter; punks are running wild in the street. And we sit watching our TVs, and all we say is, 'Please, at least leave us alone in our living rooms.' Well, I'm not going to leave you alone. I want you to get mad! I want you to get up right now and go to the window, open it, and stick your head out and yell, 'I'm as mad as hell, and I'm not going to take this anymore!'"

The irony is that although Beale urges his viewers to "think for themselves" and "turn off the tube," he himself becomes another celebrity – another distraction. By the end, we feel something of the frustration the prophet Isaiah must have felt. He was told to speak to the people knowing that they would hear him but – like Beale's audience – do nothing.

Unusual images

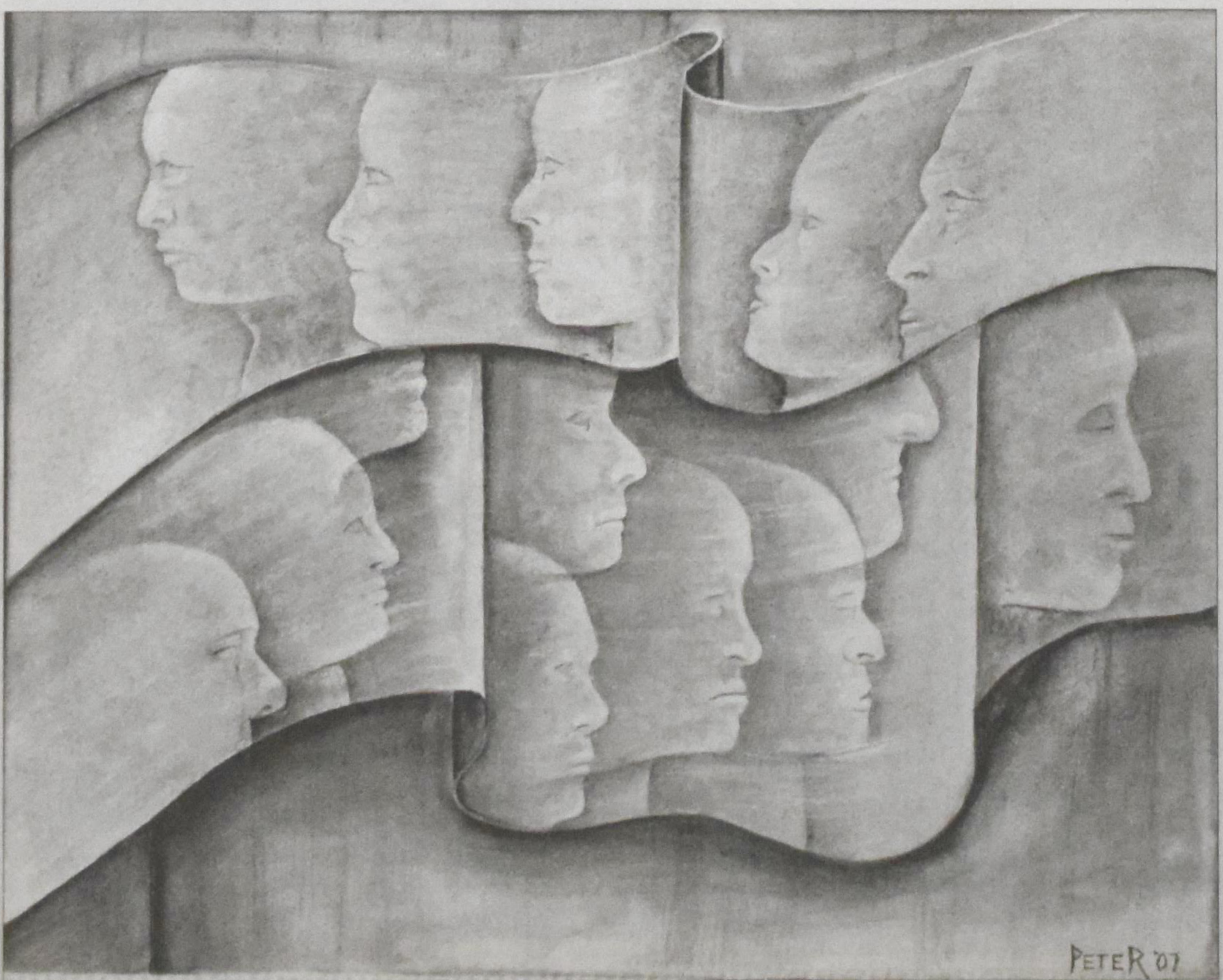
What Isaiah soon learns is that it is not enough to speak plain truth to the people. To transform the heart, you must first capture the imagination – and this requires more than facts and statistics. Isaiah uses the unusual images in Chapter 11 to alter the community's perception of the situation. On the surface his vision may seem absurd. But as Walter Brueggemann has suggested, "[I]n the new age, these will be the normal things. And the effect of the poem is to expose the real abnormalities of life, which we have taken for granted." Bruegemann calls this the prophetic imagination.

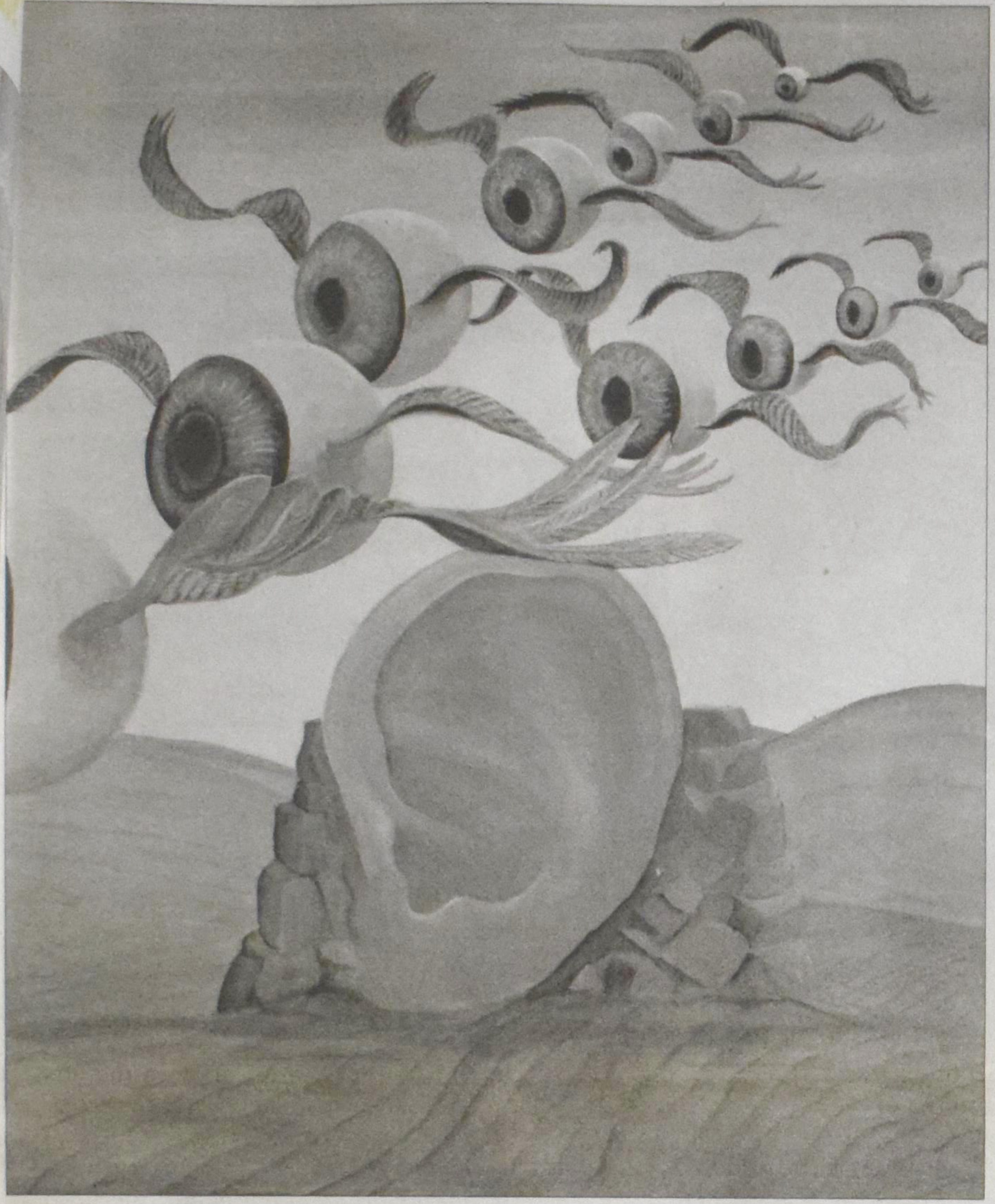
The theologian N.T. Wright argued that now, more than ever, we need prophets to help us imagine. We need prophets who are willing to stand outside society, to critique its visual branding, and to help us imagine something different. Wright connects this to artistic activity. As he says, "You need imagination to live in God's world."

What about imagination?

Sadly, the church (at least the Protestant church) has not always allowed the arts much room to help us imagine. All too often we have turned theology into an intellectual exercise: systematic, logical and coherent. There is very little room in our catechism classes for surreal images or flights of fancy. When we have allowed the artist into our theology it is often as a support to what we already know to be true – a polite banner proclaiming "Jesus is Lord," a tame series of landscapes as a backdrop to chorus lyrics, or a benign illustration in a church bulletin.

Much of Peter Reitsma's work was birthed in a very rare and special church:





About the images

Bipolar Priest:

Still holding his rosary, a homeless priest sleeps on the hard bench with the fragmented memory of his past, the photo of him in his good days. The tiny cross on the rosary evokes hope in a vision of despair. This servant of the church, now an outcast, becomes a metaphor for the church.

Seek My Face:

Those who seek God's face and those who turn away live side by side and weave and flow through each others' lives in a veil of invisibility, yet those with faith in God dramatically impact those who are headed in the opposite direction.

Flip Side of the Coin:

This picture of excruciating vulnerability is not meant to condemn superpowers, but a reminder that the God we trust is also a God of justice. Those oppressed by the spirit of empire cry out to that God without ceasing.

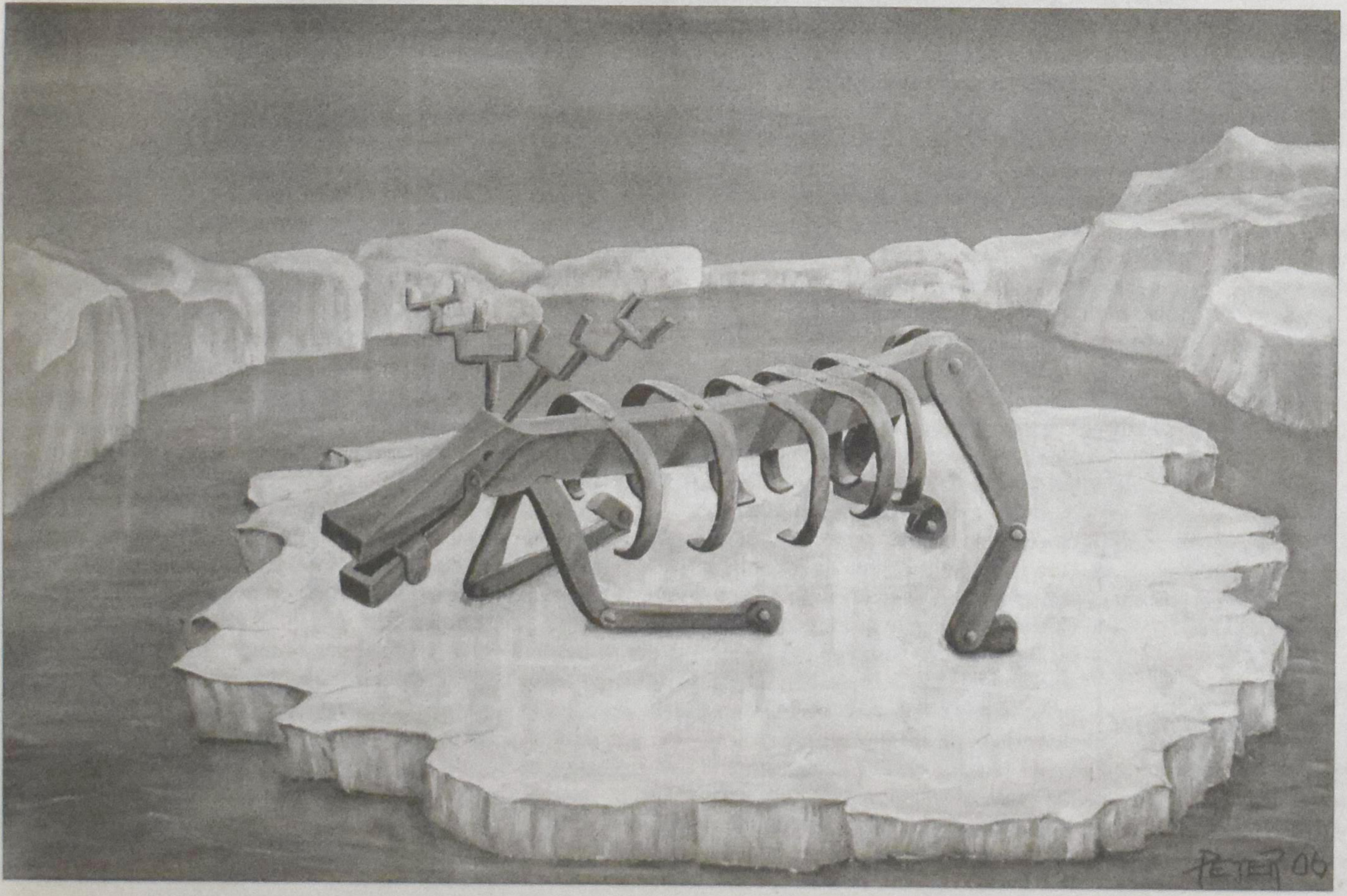
The Resurrection of Vincent's Ear:

Not in his right mind, Vincent Van Gogh removed the lobe of his left ear which he put into an envelope and gave to a woman named Rachel with these words: "Guard this object carefully." The large ear monument in the desert with flying eyeballs in V-formation is a metaphor for the rebirth of prophetic artistic listening, which comes before seeing.

Greenhouse Blues:

The metallic skeletal remains (*As the deer pants for streams of water*, Ps.41:2) is frozen in a position of need and supplication on a melting ice floe. Mankind is altering the landscape. It is now well known that the survival of the caribou in the north is threatened by encroaching oil development and related global warming. Is it possible to give the land a voice? What would we hear and see?

Meadowvale Community Christian Reformed Church in Mississauga. It is a rare place where artists set up easels to paint and potters set up wheels during services. It is a place where the artist is valued for his prophetic ability to imagine. Where art is created spontaneously as a result of worship and prayer in a public setting – where the community looks not just to its pastors and preachers, but to its artists: for images, for dreams and for messages as they paint God's revelation of his heart for his people.



And Peter's work is also a response to a world that – like the network that Howard Beale railed against – uses images to sell. Peter comes out of the world of graphic design and he knows well the visual vocabulary of branding and the pervasive power of images in a consumer society. This artwork reflects the deep burden of Peter's heart. The world is not right – and it is good to recognize and name injustice and poverty and corruption. But I also sense a profound wonder and whimsy and hope in Peter's work that balances a cry of despair with a vision of something more.

The Christian community is often guilty of producing bad art. It's not bad because it lacks skill, but because it doesn't invite us to play. It dives for the easily recognizable symbol as a device for getting at a literal meaning. But Peter's art is allusive – it plays, and it invites us to play with it. To interactively discover new meanings in his suggestion-rich visual language. And we are invited. I see in Peter a true servant heart. An artist who, without pretension or arrogance, speaks with the voice of one crying in the wilderness and creates images of both conviction and wonder.

To visit Peter Reitsma's website go to www.petereitsma.com
His artshow at Redeemer University College runs until November 20th.

Corinthians

Accepting risky service

And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour?
I Cor. 15:30

A. A. Van Ruler

To become aware of the enormous consequences of "resurrection denial," one need not just consider the behaviour of people who let themselves be baptized for the dead. Their behaviour makes absolutely no sense if there is no resurrection of the dead. Something similar happens, though, if one considers the fate of those who have given themselves completely to the preaching of the gospel.

In Paul, this strikes us again and again: he thinks so often about himself. Not, mind you, about his own well-being, but about what God is using him for. And here is shown his great sense of calling. He is absolutely sure of the fact that God is using him purposely and in a very specific way. Moreover, that the work to which he has been called is a great and decisive task, a task that will move the world.

We who are living twenty centuries later will agree and comment that Paul certainly was not wrong in that his work has indeed moved the world. It is Paul's restless traveling around the world that has laid the foundation for the gospel in Europe. Through his work, too, Christ's revelation to the world and to Israel is still a fact.

But it is not so simple to be used for such a great task. A man such as Paul is being dragged out of his comfort zone and is being put in the middle of all the dangers and hurdles of the world. It is not hard to imagine at this point that God himself did something similar. God's incarnation in Jesus Christ, after all, meant that the Lord himself entered into the whole rebellious and risky world. The street is a dangerous place when there is a revolution; a stray bullet is an easy thing to catch.

Lewes Bonfire Night, procession of the Martyr's Crosses. Part of the Bonfire Night celebrations on November 5 in Lewes, Sussex, England. The burning crosses commemorate the 17 Protestant martyrs who were burnt at the stake in the town during the Marian persecutions of 1555–1557.

However, God did not think like this. In spite of the violent revolution, the ongoing rebellion and the resulting chaos in which mankind finds itself, God entered the world by sending his Son. The results were as could be expected: It ended with a cross.

Well, says Paul, something similar still happens every day to the servants of the gospel, to all those who surrender themselves unconditionally to that service. Since we, over here, are living in an orderly and more or less Christian society, the demons are bound and, for that reason ministers of the gospel aren't much bothered by that. Witnesses to the gospel can live in peace and quiet. But that could change quite quickly and suddenly. It is especially in the 20th century that we've witnessed many situations where life-threatening danger was the order of the day if one openly confessed the name of Christ.

The reason for that is, while holding out the gospel of life, one gets immediately involved in the struggle against the powers of evil. Since Christ's servants are Christ's soldiers as well, they are continually sent to the front lines where they actively must do battle. And *that*, that could cost them their lives.

Now why would one do this if there is no resurrection? In that case, this life is all we have and why then give it up? We'd be fools not to go to extremes to hold on to *that* life to the bitter end. Would we dare risk even for a moment something so very precious? Wouldn't we rather be bent on getting out of life, as long as we have it, as much as we possibly could? Whether that is rest or ease, power or honour, lust or happiness really doesn't matter all that much here. One lives with the feeling that everything stops with death and that's how one is shackled to this life. That's what people hang on to, that's the cup they want to drink to the dregs.

With that, one's attitude to life becomes somewhat frantic. There is no longer any real courage, any real inner freedom. In that kind of life it will be ever harder to follow a calling that brings us to the brink of life or even surpasses it. Moreover, that is elf-evident for another reason as well. If there is no resurrection, then there is no God either, no Lord of death and life who causes his children to rise from the dead. And if there is no God, how could there ever be a calling in life? After all the word *calling* does assume that we are called and isn't that only possible when there is Another one – one who is a *caller*?

Everything here turns out to fit very closely together. Considering all things, the reasoning of the apostle here is not that he denies himself so much in this life, that his existence is in permanent danger, *because* he hopes – hope based on the gospel – to get something out of it in the here-after. No, his reasoning is rather this: There *is* a resurrection which means that we are radically in God's hands. Our imagination cannot sound the depth of what that precisely means: The God of life and death, in his unfathomable goodness, does with us what he thinks best. That's why he calls us daily into, sometimes mortal danger, but he calls us in the same way he will call us out of death on that Day of days.

All this is complete nonsense if the one great premise would fail, namely that God *is* and that he causes his children to rise from the dead.

This is Paul's reality: In that case all perspective and all "solid ground" are gone. If people are not in God's hands, they can still try for a while to hold on to the world or to themselves. But in the long run it will still turn out to be an enormous mistake. Can people really have an anchor in themselves? On the basis of that "solid ground," can one afford to be in mortal danger all the time? Is it possible to have a calling from within oneself, out of oneself to give destination and sense to one's life? Is it conceivable that one design one's own life and existence in absolute freedom? Or is the end result of that a radical absurdity or mental breakdown?

There is only one choice left. Either give up your faith in yourself and live life as best you can, or return to the fear of God which means thinking that God is God and that we did not make ourselves and that we are in God's hands. What that means, in all actuality, is to live out of a gospel of resurrection. For if we are really serious about this, namely that God is God and we are in his hands, then the gospel of resurrection is actually perfectly obvious. It is, therefore, the only solid ground upon which we live and move and have our being.

Why do we endanger ourselves every hour? The answer is simple: because God has called us to that and holds us fast in that. he is quite almighty against all the powers of evil. And we are rock-sure that he, in his immense love, wants what is best for us.

Translated from the Dutch by Bram Hoff

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Alyssa's story

Ria Wiersma

This is the story of our granddaughter Alyssa with whom we traveled through the valley of death to a glorious journey of hope.

It was in the summer of 2003 that our youngest son Richard, and his wife Gena, told us that early the next year we would become grandparents for the first time. We were thrilled as we could not wait to become grandparents! We live in Trenton and at that time they were living in Oakville, not exactly next door! We had to wait patiently.

On February 16, 2004 the long awaited call came: "You have a granddaughter – a healthy girl at 8 lbs. All is well. Her name is Alyssa Jolene." What a happy day that was! To my great surprise they named her after one of my sisters in the Netherlands.

My sister Ali

The story of one of my sisters is a story of its own. In 1939 my mother gave birth to twins, a boy and a girl. When they were eight months old they became very ill and my little brother died. My sister survived, but when she was around two years old it became apparent that she was severely mentally handicapped as a result of the medication she received. Being the oldest girl in the family, I became Ali's "caregiver" when my mother was busy with other things. As a result, a bond was forged between her and me; she became my "baby," and she has always had a special place in my heart.

Then, when my sister became four years old, and it became more and more difficult to look after her, she was placed in an institution. Today she is a woman in her late sixties. She has never spoken, and she lives in her own world at a group home. She is usually a happy person, who loves classical music and hums songs all the time. Because of her condition, she is excluded from special festivities in the family.

A special weekend

During the early parts of labour preceding the birth, Gena said to Richard that if it would be a girl they should name her after Aunt Ali. By doing so Ali would be fully recognized and remembered as a member of the family. And that is how Alyssa got her name. I was very touched by their decision and shed some tears, thanking God for Gena's thoughtfulness.

On the 21st of February we hopped on the train to Oakville to see our new granddaughter. It was wonderful to see her and hold her in my arms. What a miracle – a tiny human being with a lot of black hair. We had a great visit and our hearts were filled. Alyssa continued to grow well, and only a few weeks later, on the weekend of March 13, Alyssa made her first visit to Opa and Oma's place in Trenton. That was a very special weekend in which I had the chance to really bond with her and experienced with the Psalmist the words which had been placed on Alyssa's birth announcement: "For you make me glad by your deeds, O Lord; I sing for joy at the works of your hands". (Psalm 92:4) Later on, these words took on a whole new meaning.

Something was wrong

Our expectations for normal growth, healthy development, and increased awareness of her surroundings changed for us just after that weekend. Back at home again for only three days, Alyssa started crying a lot, and it was difficult to get her to sleep. When her 2:00 a.m feeding came, she did not wake up. By 4:00 a.m. Gena decided to wake and change her. It was then that she discovered that Alyssa was lethargic and her eyes were not responding normally. Gena woke Richard up, fearful that something was very wrong. She felt they should consult with their midwife, who suggested that they should take Alyssa to the hospital without delay.

They took her to the Emergency where doctors determined that her condition was very serious. They diagnosed a blood infection affecting all her organs. Alyssa was put on a respirator, and the parents were told that Alyssa should be admitted to a paediatric ICU either at Toronto Sick Kids or McMaster Hospital in Hamilton. Their preference was Hamilton, but they would need to go wherever there was a bed available. Alyssa was put in an ambulance and transported to McMaster Hospital where she was diagnosed with meningitis resulting from a bacterial infection in her blood.

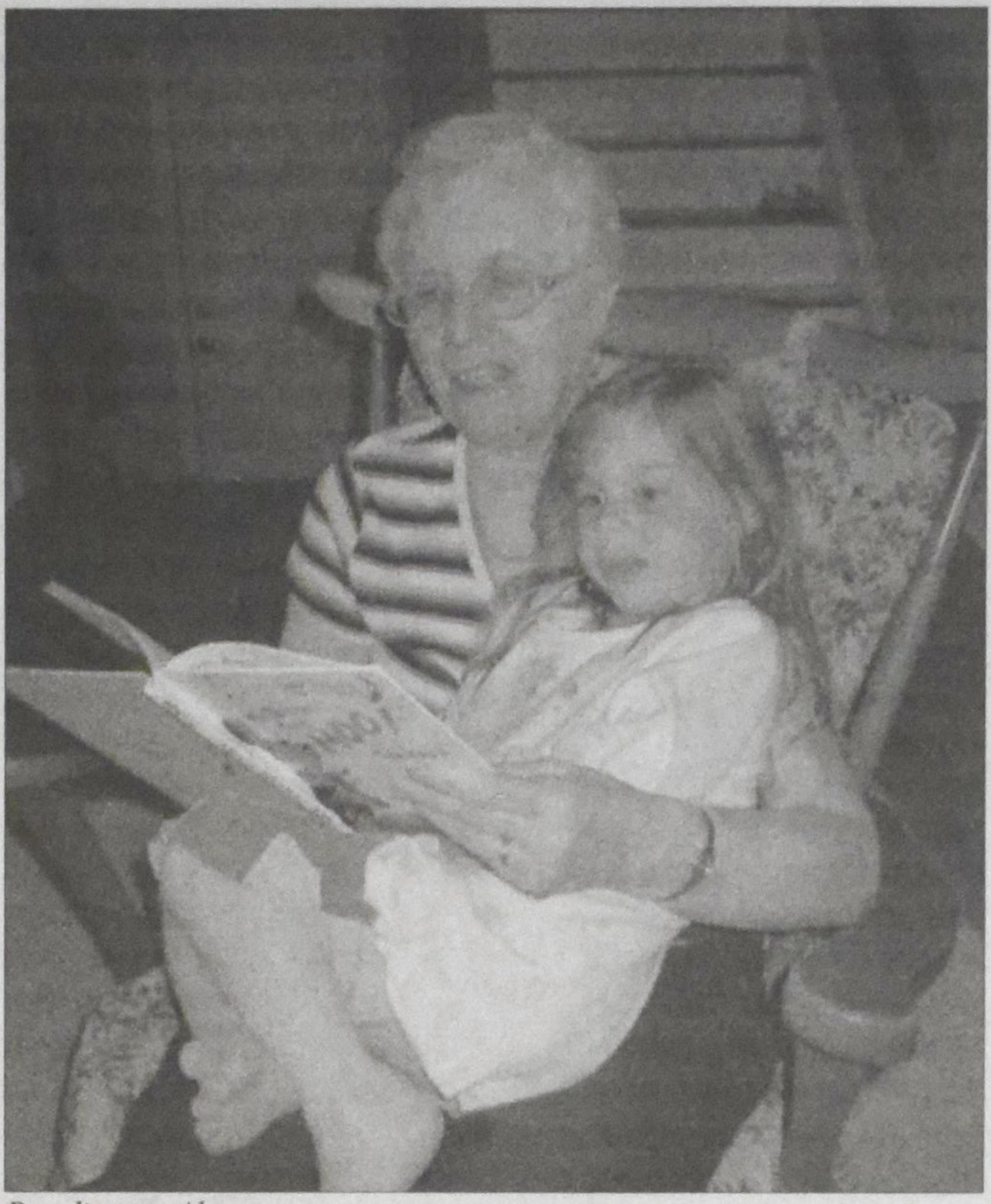
The next few weeks became an emotional roller coaster and we really felt the distance between us and the little family. We were so thankful that we had a computer so we could stay up-to-date via e-mail. And we talked as often as we could. Richard and Gena were staying at Ronald McDonald House near the hospital so that they could be near to Alyssa at all times and have a comfortable place for some rest. There they had many conveniences and were able to use a computer and welcome friends. It was from here that they kept us and many friends and family up to date with mass emails.

Thursday March 18

On the third day of their stay at the hospital we received this news in a mass e-mail from Richard and Gena:

...Alyssa's organs appear to be moving back toward normalcy. The major concern is the meningitis. Yesterday she had a number of tests done which showed reduced brain activity and the suggestion of fluid build up... Gena and I are hopeful that Alyssa will be returning home with us at some point, but are having to prepare ourselves that things might be different....

This really hit me, and I immediately thought back to 1940 when the twins became so sick and what happened to Ali after that. My reaction was a cry to God: "Oh God, not again? You are not going to do that again? She is named after Ali, will she now become like her too?" While I pleaded with God and my tears were flowing, a peace came over me and in my heart I heard God say, "No, I am not going to do that again, I will show you a different ending." Was this real? I started clinging to that hope, but I was still scared. My heart ached for Richard and Gena.



Reading to Alyssa

Friday, March 19

Another email followed:

Yesterday signs of improvement in Alyssa's vitals were encouraging and she is quite stable. She still breathes with a respirator but they have taken her off blood pressure medication and she has not needed any blood products for over a day now.

The more grim news came around 6:00 p.m. during a family meeting with our paediatrician, the nursing staff and the neurologists. They told us that Alyssa has severe and widespread brain damage. From the MRI reading, it appears that the brain stem (which controls the vitals such as breathing, maintaining blood pressure etc...) has not been affected. On the other hand, we are to expect nothing less than severe damage in terms of her physical and mental development. We are coming to terms with this. In the back of our minds we were bracing for this, but actually hearing it was painful.

We do not ask "why did this happen to our daughter", or "what could we have done differently", "or how could God let this happen" – we already know the answers to these questions; we live in a fallen world where bad things happen to good people. Despite all that has happened we draw strength and encouragement from things we had never imagined before. Alyssa is named after her Aunt Ali. Ali was less than a year old when she suffered a severe illness that also resulted in severe brain damage. While we named Alyssa after Ali in order to remember her, we now draw hope from the fact that Ali has led a very happy and full life. As parents, we hope and pray that our children will be happy. Alyssa will be happy; it's the parents who suffer for a while.

We have shed many tears over the past few days, most of them for the hopes and dreams that we had for Alyssa, others for the joy we have felt at knowing that we are not alone in this. We feel the prayers and support of a community we never realized was so close to us.

Anxious times

We had made arrangements with our other son and his wife, who lived in Kitchener, that we would come to them and they would take us to Hamilton on the Saturday and Sunday.

And so on the 20th and 21st we were with them, and we saw Alyssa, hooked up to many machines, all kinds of monitors, unrecognizable, puffed up with fluids. We were not prepared to see her in such condition; wires and tubes all over and her tiny body almost grotesque from fluids. It was almost unbearable. What happened while we were there is reflected in another one of their messages:

Sunday was a trying and exhausting day at the hospital. We always come in the morning with a little fear, wondering how things will be.

Alyssa had a decent night for which we were thankful, but by mid-morning she started to have seizures, and they continued throughout the day. By mid afternoon and late into the night she was continually seizing despite being medicated for them. The seizures were different each time, suggesting they came from different parts of the brain, reinforcing the global and severe nature of her brain injury. Needless to say we went home with heavy, aching hearts....

Outbursts of prayer

It was frightening to see that little body continually shaking; all we did was cry and

Continued on page 16

A journey

Alyssa's story continued from page 15

pray. Eventually we headed back with them (along with our other son and his wife) to the Ronald McDonald house for supper. Richard mentioned that he was glad we could stay for supper; "We have so much food!" he said. During Alyssa's stay in the hospital every day people would drop off meals for them. And other times someone would come and volunteer to stay with Alyssa so that Richard and Gena could have a break, which was very much appreciated. They needed some time alone, even if it was just to have a meal together.

That night, it was difficult to go home, but we knew that God would look after them better than we could. We were so thankful that Richard and Gena could feel that God was with them and that they knew who to turn to in these difficult days.

In the meantime the heavens were stormed with prayers for Alyssa, all over Canada, in the Netherlands, Thailand and Austria, – people who did not even know her were praying, prayer groups in various churches put her on their prayer list. It was the perfect "Communion of the Saints."

The joy of a smile

On Monday, after returning home, another email:

...In the morning we returned, once again fearful, but when we arrived she was a different baby. They had taken out the breathing tube. She was awake and looking around. She was moving and stretching and grunting in ways we recognized. Then, when Richard bent down to kiss her and stroke her face, she smiled. We were moved to tears and we have never known such joy!

At that exact moment the CD in the room was playing a praise song: "Your love is amazing, steady and unchanging...Hallelujah, your Love makes me sing". It was a moment in time we will never forget.

By noon they had removed a few more lines, and by mid afternoon she was able to breast feed. In the evening the paediatrician told us that given her condition and results of tests earlier in the week, Alyssa is already doing more than he ever would have expected.

Alyssa was a miracle when she was born, and it's like we witnessed a miracle of rebirth. We do not know what the future holds, and there may be still significant long-term effects, but for now our hearts are filled. Alyssa's life is like a blank slate without the traditional hopes and dreams a parent may have. Alyssa will write her own story, but for us, every day will be a miracle.

Our God has blessed us with a fantastic community. Keep praying with us.

Remarkable progress

That week we were informed that Alyssa had been moved from ICU to a ward room and the transition was not easy. The nurses there had to look after more than one patient and there was not the security of personal nursing staff and computers monitoring all the vital signs. More was expected from the parents, but they were so happy, because this transition was a sign that things were more stable. Here they could be more responsible for caring for her everyday concerns again, bathing her, feeding, holding her, playing with her. This was expressed in their email of Friday March 26:

Alyssa's progress in the last few days has been remarkable – the doctors continue to be amazed at her recovery and the fact that she is acting like any other five-week-old baby. She has not had another seizure since Sunday night.

Yesterday they removed the IV from her shaved "Mohawk" head (her hair is shaved off at both sides) and it has made it much easier for us to hold her and move her around. Dad is very proud that he can stay with her at night and feed her from a bottle now. It appears that she can see, and she reacts to noise. She is moving all her limbs purposefully, so it doesn't appear she suffers any paralysis. Alyssa was always a gift, but we cherish and give thanks for each sign of development all the more now.

On Wednesday the doctors wanted to insert a "pic" line which would enter a vein in her elbow, go up her arm and eventually allow antibiotics to enter closer to the heart. From the line they would also be able to draw blood. Unfortunately, it didn't work as her veins collapsed – every possible IV point in her hands, elbows and feet had been used up now. That afternoon they surgically inserted a line beginning at her upper thigh, and they followed a vein to within a few centimetres of her heart.

Alyssa had another close call when there were complications with the line in the morning. The line had broken during the night and it was feared it would be unusable because the lines clot with blood if fluid is not flowing through it continuously. Thankfully the surgeon was able to open the line again.

Alyssa is scheduled for an MRI (brain scan) this weekend. While we understand the need for the MRI, at this point we are not concerned about the results. We have seen how God has heard the prayers of his people and he answered them. Through this all we have learned to respect what the doctors and nurses have done, but we put our trust and hope in God. We have experienced too many "coincidences" and miraculous recovery in Alyssa's short life to believe anything but that we have a God who loves and cares for us all."

The best birthday

This news came on the day of my birthday and was the best gift I ever received. May heart was overflowing with thanks.

We stayed in touch by telephone and on Sunday April 4 we received another update by e-mail:

Alyssa is doing very well. She eats, sleeps and fills her diaper like any six-week-old baby. Except for the shaved sides of her head and some tremors, you would never know she was so sick only two and a half weeks ago. We will remain in the hospital until the antibiotics finish their 21-day course. We are both very much looking forward to going home on Tuesday, April 6. She will have to continue with anti-seizure medication for at least two or three months before they would consider reducing her dose. The medication is given orally.

The doctors and therapists have begun preparing us for life at home by connecting us to the appropriate resources in our own community. Her growth and development will be monitored closely for years to come so that, if there is any delay or any difficulties we may be proactive in treating them.

Even though there are a lot of unknowns with Alyssa's future, we feel incredibly hopeful and are excited. We know that no matter what may come, it will seem easy by comparison with what we have experienced in the last few weeks. Even more exciting is the realization that we are not alone in this, but are surrounded by a loving and caring community.

On the weekend of April 10th, both our sons with their wives and Alyssa came to visit us. It was a true celebration! After all that had happened, our hearts were full of thanks to God for making all things well. God showed me that indeed, this time, things would be different. Praise be to Him.

Wednesday, April 14

We are home! We are enjoying our personal space, bright windows and hours of uninterrupted sleep. It is so nice to carry Alyssa without any tubes or wires attached, to go for a long walk, and to give her a bath!

In the next few weeks there are numerous follow-up appointments, but we are just so happy to see Alyssa looking so well. The last concern is build-up of fluid on her brain that has doubled in size over the past three weeks. She will have another MRI in a couple of weeks to determine if it is still getting larger. If so, it will need to be drained.

The doctors assured us that she is not suffering ill affects from the fluid build-up, but we are to keep watch.

Back in 1940, at the funeral service for my little brother, the minister read Psalm 116 and spoke specifically on vs.15: "How painful it is to the Lord when one of his people dies". This Psalm was always connected to that sad event, but now I can also connect it to Alyssa when I read vs. 12, "What can I offer to the Lord for all his goodness to me?"

On May 9th Alyssa was baptized; a very special day on which she received God's covenant promise. After many weeks of anguish we celebrated God's goodness shown to us all.

On February 16, 2005,Alyssa had a big birthday party, the biggest she will most likely ever have. The whole family was there, as well as many friends and colleagues. Alyssa was the centre of attention, and when the big cake was put in front of her, she did not hesitate to dig in with both hands.

Alyssa digging into her birthday cake on her first birthday.

Alyssa is now four years old, and she is a big sister to Hendrik and Nicole. She is an energetic, playful, strong, happy girl who looks forward to starting pre-kindergarten classes this year. To us, she is a constant reminder that we have an awesome God.

Except for her delayed speech, she manages very well and continues to amaze the medical profession with her progress. She will always be our miracle girl, and, just like her Aunt Ali, she will always have a special place in my heart.

Ria Wiersma (jwiersma@reach.net) lives in Trenton, Ontario. She and her husband, Jake, met through the pages of the Christian Courier *years ago, then known as* Calvinist Contact.

Hometown cross-cultural ministry

Bob Zomermaand

When a pastor hears the phrase cross-cultural ministry, his or her mind most likely thinks of the call to be involved in the mission of God in a place far from home. A place where one must learn a new language, become aware of cultural attitudes that are very different from one's own, and grow acquainted with the local ideas of what makes for gourmet eating. The challenge of this type of cross-cultural ministry can be great – so much so that a pastor may remind him or herself that, "God did not call me to that kind of mission. Praise his Name!"

Those who find themselves pastoring in North America normally find themselves engaged in ministries that look profoundly like themselves. It is said that the gatherings of the church are more culturally homogenous than any other grouping in the North American cultural scene. Yet I believe that if a pastor is committed to excellence in the cause of Jesus, he or she needs to get involved in local cross-cultural ministry.

Cultural changes

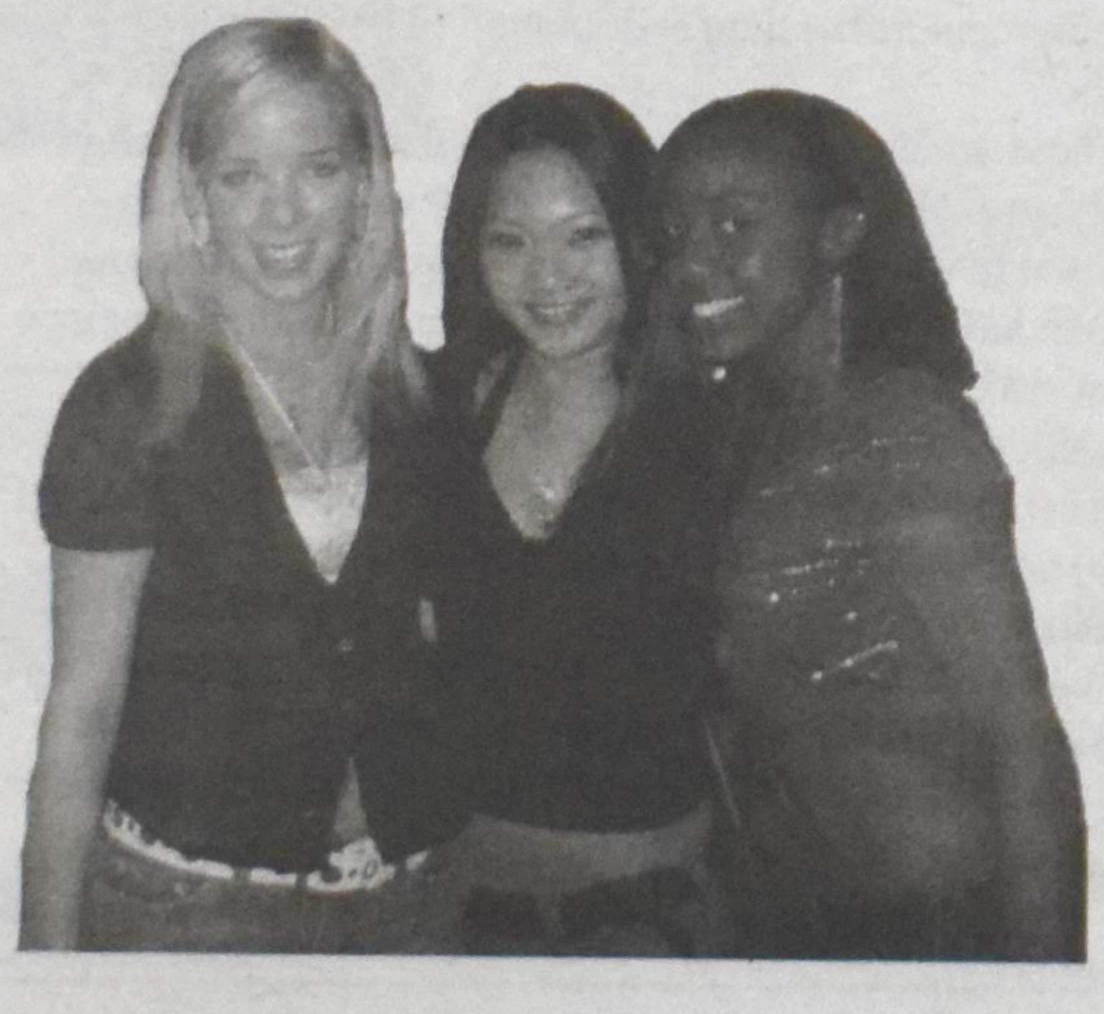
Let me give you just two examples of cross-cultural ministry.

Philosopher Leonard Sweet tells us that a great cultural divide exists between those who were born into the technological world we experience today and those who were not born into it. Older folks, like me, are immigrants into a culture that is quite unlike anything we knew as we grew up. For those growing up in recent years, the concept of the computer, the cell phone, and the Internet have so completely dominated the culture that it is difficult to imagine an earlier time.

I lived for over a decade in a state called the "Crossroads of America." The city I lived in had a large population of students from all over the world. Young people from many different nations had gathered in that city to study together and to learn from each other intriguing ideas drawn from their cultures. Most every city in North America has a recent immigrant population – people who were living in a different country twenty years ago. These immigrants have brought cross-cultural ministry to our North American doorsteps – a challenge undreamed of a generation ago.

Familiarize yourself

In the face of how fast our culture is changing around us, we as pastors are urged to learn how to minister cross-culturally even within our church families. If we are going to minister effectively and with any hope of excellence, we need to be conversant with, and in, a variety of cultures or risk being alienated from those who inhabit a different world than we do. Younger pastors need to examine the outlook on life that the retiree in their churches have due to the older person's cultural assumptions. Older pastors need to open their hearts to the youth culture in order to avoid being totally out of touch with those under 25. We all need to rise above our own culture centric assumptions about the appeal of the Gospel in order to excel in bringing the Good News to other cultures living right next door to us, or even under our own roofs.



It seems to me that many of us are only comfortable with those who are like us. We hesitate to open a dialogue with someone whose native language is different from our own. Our faltering attempt to find something to say to the stranger next to us comes to a halt after a comment about the weather. We return to an uneasy silence as we drop our stare to our laptop. The discomfort of the silence seems easier to bear than trying to find a way to speak to someone different from ourselves.The curse of Babel has managed to keep us apart for another day.

A new community

Yet when I turn to the Bible and read the book of Acts, I find Babel being overturned on Pentecost. I see people sharing the Good News with people unlike themselves. The result is a dynamic new community of people dedicated to Jesus Christ and the mission of God to the world "out there." The idea of there being a culture to which the Good News did not urgently need to be brought would not have occurred to the church about whom we read, "And the Lord added daily to their number those who were being saved."

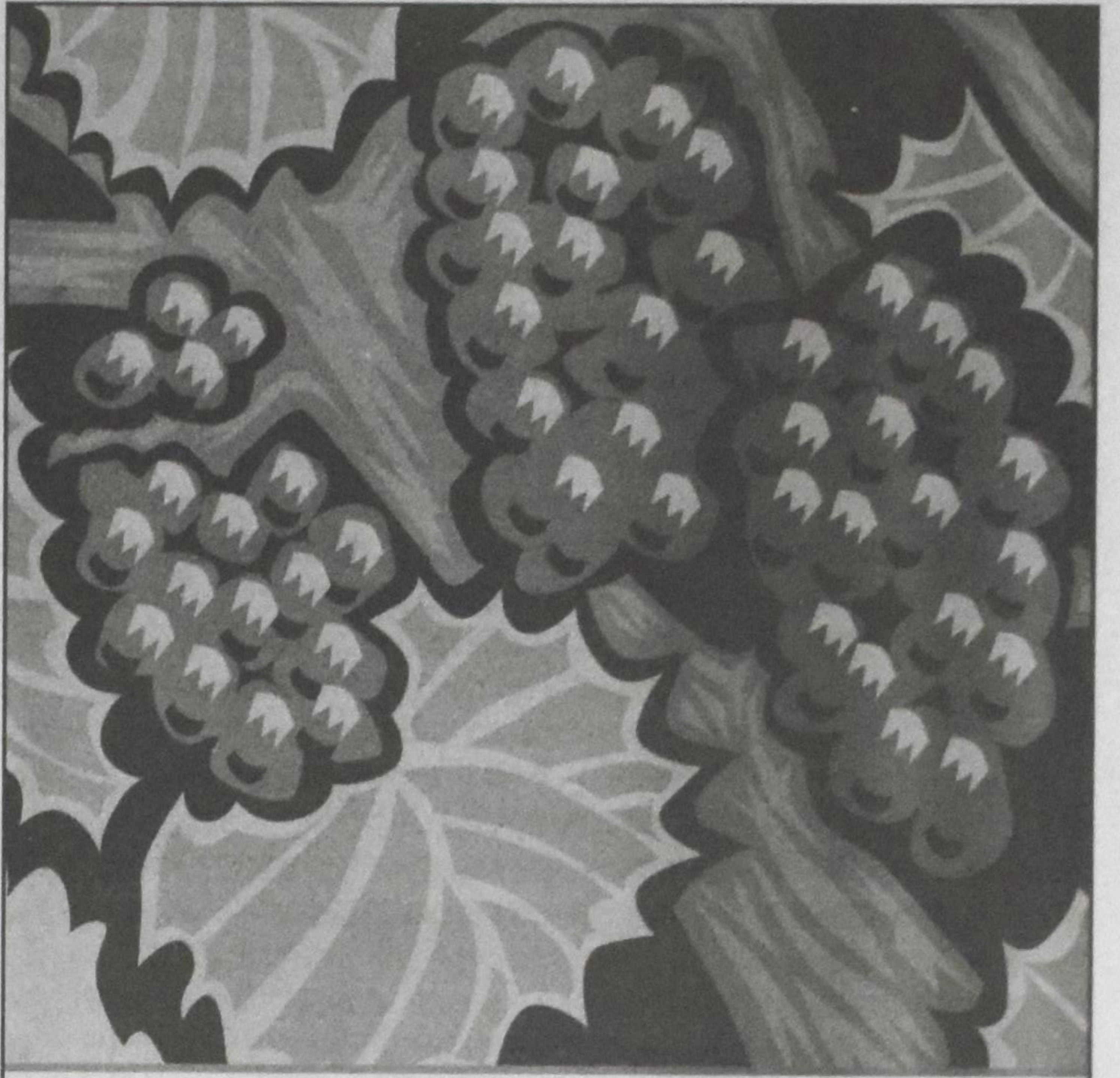
Even the emperor's household was not safe from the Gospel. When Paul was a prisoner there, he found a way to bear witness to Jesus even when there was reason to be silent and just try to stay alive. The jailor in Philippi had placed Paul and Silas into the inner prison and secured them firmly in stocks but he was privileged to hear the Good News that has echoed over the centuries, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and your household." He and his household were baptized and welcomed into the body of Jesus that very night.

Commuting to church

Over 20 years ago I had the privilege of casting a vision for a church in a large North American city. The church would be a place where people from all over the world would find a spiritual home in community – with each other and with Jesus as Lord. The neighborhoods around our commuter church were made up of people from all over the world but the church was largely of a single ethnic extraction and was culturally homogenous. Living in the church's parsonage, I was like many of the commuters who were immersed in an economic culture totally different from that of the community surrounding our building. As we studied the Word together, we knew God was stirring us to become a church, an ecclesia, called out from all the peoples in our community. In the Scriptures, he called us to dream of a church that reflected the community in which we found ourselves.

While it took over ten years for the dream to even begin to become a reality, today the people who dared to dream a God-sized ideal of a multi-cultural church are amazed at what God has done. They look around

Continued on p. 18



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is merely preparation....

Loving does not at first mean
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surrendering,
and uniting
with another person –

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for the individual to ripen...
to become a world in himself
for the sake of another person;
it is a great,
demanding
claim on him,
something that chooses him
and calls him to vast distances.

Rainer Maria Rilke

Cross-cultural ministry*...continued from p. 17*

the sanctuary and see people native to five different continents. Their mother tongues number more than a dozen. Their cultural assumptions bump up against one another most every week. And yet, they are God's family together. It is a place of great joy in Christ.

Be a dreamer

Suppose you would dare to dream a God-sized dream in each of your cities and towns. What would a church made up of people from every nation and culture found within your city, your town, look like? In the book of John's Revelation we read of the kings of the nations bringing the splendor of their nations into the city of God – the New Jerusalem come down from heaven. Suppose we were to dream of a church led by a pastor who saw with God's eyes the splendor of the nations and cultures right there in the church's locale. Suppose those cultures were all found in your congregation because God added to your number every day those who were being saved!

Are you a dreamer? Then begin today by initiating a conversation with someone very unlike yourself. This honors God and builds a healthy church – which is a little taste of heaven right here on God's good earth!

Getting Unstuck
Arlene Van Hove

Nuggets in the distraction

"What film are you planning to see?" asks our son as he is leaning out of his truck ready to leave our house.

"A chick flick," my spouse says.

"What is that suppose to mean?" I characteristically retort not wanting to disappoint them.

They both smile slyly.

I let them think they pushed my buttons once again.

A "chick flick," of course, is a film heavy on dialogue and short on action.

A hard-to-keep-myself-awake kind of film my spouse once told me.

But he is tagging along because life is complicated lately and he thinks I need distraction and company.

My spouse and son were the only males in our family for a long time and somewhat outnumbered by our three daughters and myself. Now that our children are all grown and married we have a healthy balance of five women and five men. And so the dynamics have changed. My sons-in-law tell me I have a bias against the male gender, which is noticeable in my comments and conversations. I tell them, whenever I make unsavoury remarks about men, I do, at times, preface them with "my comments do not apply to my son or sons-in-law." Unfortunately, I often forget to include my long-suffering husband in this disclaimer. So, a while ago his younger brother came to his defence and to the defence of Boomer men in general, and I took to heart his criticism of my particular frailty and foible.

In any case, my spouse and I eventually leave the house for the local theatre. Since I enjoy blue skies and billowing seas and surf, we decide on *Nights in Rodanthe*. Of course, the blue-shuttered, shingle-sided inn sitting on stilts, as the sea laps the bottom steps of wooden staircases is also very appealing as a backdrop.

The story itself is simple. It revolves around Adrienne (Diane Lane) a frazzled, separated, midlife wife and mother who is looking after her best friend's B&B for the weekend. Paul (Richard Gere), a divorced, midlife surgeon and father, is the only guest at the inn. He is equally frazzled as is Adrienne but is carrying an emotional burden to boot. He has come to town because he was invited by the grieving husband of a patient who died on Paul's operating table to talk about what happened. Eventually, Paul and Adrienne share parts of their life's story. They find out they both have children who do not particularly like them.

Eventually, Paul visits the grieving husband. He explains that out of fifty thousand operations one can go wrong for some unknown reason. This is simply a fact. The husband is not impressed. He asks Paul if he knew the colour of his patient's eyes that day. He is stumped. Later in the day Paul talks to Adrienne about the visit. She has a perceptive ear and eventually gives him her "what for" when she hears how he "defended" himself. She promptly challenges him to connect more meaningfully with the mourning man. And so, he returns and sits across from the husband in his living room and listens to him talking about his wife and how much he loved her. Paul, in turn, tells the husband how sorry he is his wife died. There is no sign of trying to explain it away and no sign of defensiveness. There is only honest acceptance of what happened and the sadness surrounding this experience.

"How did you like the 'chick flick?" I ask my spouse on the way home.

"Could not get into it," he says. "Too stilted and staged."

"That could have been part of their characters. They were possibly "stilting and staging" their way through life," I suggest.

"No, that was poor acting," he responds.

"Is that a fact?" I ask teasingly.

"Yep, that's a fact." He responds candidly.

"Facts affect us emotionally…" I tentatively suggest…wanting to get into a discussion.

But there is only silence.

"It's like the doctrines of our faith, we talk about them as if they are facts but they affect us emotionally, or at least they should if …" I continue, hoping he will bite the bait.

"Honey," he says firmly, "this was supposed to be a distraction."

Truthfully, the film is a mite maudlin, sappy and predictable. But it does have a few nuggets we could take to heart. For instance, how often don't we hide behind "facts" and explain things away so we do not have to deal with our emotions? How often don't we react to criticism from our loved ones rather than accept it without defensiveness and make use of it to become a better person? Or put differently, how often do we expect that challenging one another is part of a rich love relationship? And how often don't marital couples feel stymied in their personal development rather than encouraged to be all he or she can be?

These are the questions I thought about after leaving the theatre. Not that I am better at picking out the nuggets that may be hidden in the script, but I agree men and women have many similar as well as unique strengths in this world. At least, that is what my sons-in-law suggest, and, since I am now in a family that has a more equal balanced gender representation, I have decided not to react but to accept that there is something I could learn here and just maybe…I will become a better person. Not bad for a sappy 'chick flick' I think.

Arlene Van Hove is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC. She can be reached at avanhove@shaw.ca

Classifieds

valentine

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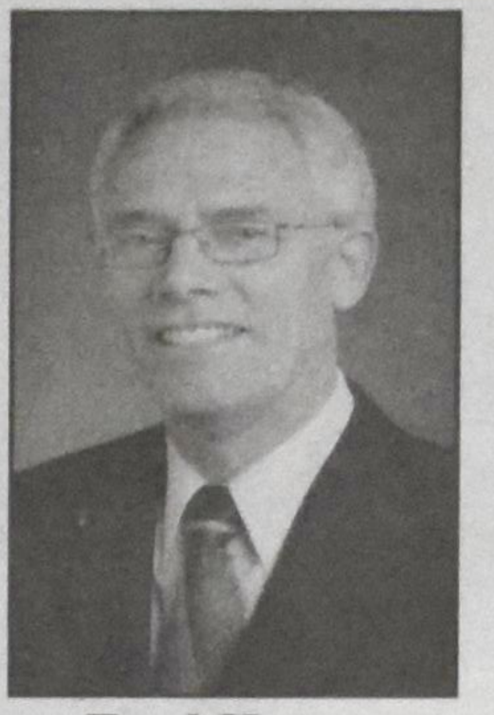

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Classifieds

Birthday

5 Generations
L-R Ryan De Haan, Ralph Veld, Grace De Haan, Mom is holding Zachery De Haan

GRIETJE (Margaret) VELD

It is with great joy, and thankfulness to God, that we announce our Mother's **95th Birthday.**
The Lord has blessed us with a wonderful mom, and it is our sincere prayer that he will continue to care for her.

Her thankful children: Ralph & Helen Veld, *York, Ont.*
Ben & Elly Veld, *Burgessville, Ont.*
Gerrit & Rosina Veld, *Welland, Ont.*
Jane & Peter Van Duyvenvoorde, *Vineland, Ont.*
Henry & Margaret Veld, *Fonthill, Ont.*
Margaret & Bert Kikkert, *Grassie, Ont.*

She has been blessed with 42 grandchildren, 52 great-grandchildren and 1 great-great-grandson.

We are planning an **Open House** for our Mom on Saturday, November 1st from 2 to 4 p.m., at Grace Christian Reformed Church, 660 South Pellham Steet, Welland, Ontario

Mom's address is: Unit C - 658 South Pelham Street, Welland ON L3C C8

Our God is so good!

Obituaries

JACOB FRANS

passed into the presence of the Lord on September 29, 2008 aged 93.
He passed away peacefully, with family at his side, at his home in Shalom Manor, Grimsby, Ontario.

He was predeceased by his infant daughter Elsje and in 2005 by his dearly beloved wife of almost 65 years, Agnes (Aagje).

Lovingly missed by:
Nick & Dini
Casey (& Sharon)
Peter & Catherine
Teo & Ena
Nina & Jake Gringhuis
Ron & Linda
Jake (& Hetty)
Betty
Richard
John & Norma Jean
Mary Ann & Bill Galston
37 grandchildren and
49 great-grandchildren.

Correspondence: Nick Frans
580 Baseline Rd S RR 2
Midland ON L4R 4K4

Dordrecht, Netherlands
September 13, 1922

Sarnia, Ontario
October 4, 2008

GERTRUDE (Trudy) BOT

Went to be with her Lord and Saviour

Lovingly missed by her husband,
Bernard Bot
Children and grandchildren:
Rudy & Rita Bot, *Abbotsford, BC*
Elicia and Jason Hrubizna
Kevin and Sherry Bot
Stephen Bot
Joel Bot
Liz & Leon Van Essen, *Duncan, BC*
Marilyn & Doug Pearn, *Newmarket, ON*
Amanda Pearn
Kyle Pearn
Julia Bot & Russ Roberts, *Sarnia, ON*

Condolences may be sent online to www.smithfuneralhome.ca
or to: Unit 607 - 1285 Sandy Lane
Sarnia ON N7V 4J7

Psalm 94:22 *But the Lord has become my fortress and my God, The rock in whom I take refuge.*

SANDRA DAMSMA (nee Zwaantje Boersma)

The Lord in his wisdom took home his child in peace on October 6, 2008 at the age of 78 years.

Beloved wife and thoughtful friend of Peter Damsma of Clinton. Lovingly remembered and sadly missed by her children and children-in-law:
Henry and Deb Damsma *of Clinton;*
Judy and David Zwiep *of Zeeland, Michigan;*
Ingrid and Clarence Dekens *of Clinton;*
and Mark and Judith Damsma *of Clinton.*

Cherished Oma of 11 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. Also missed by brothers – sisters – cousins – nieces – nephews and good friends.

The funeral service was held on Thursday Oct 9, 2008 at the Clinton Christian Reformed Church. Intermittent Clinton cemetery. Officiating Pastor: Rev. Ron Luchies.

Correspondence: Peter Damsma
PO Box 655, Clinton ON N0M 1L0

LUBERTUS JOHN (Bert) OOSTERHOF

Peacefully, on Thursday, October 9th, 2008, Bert Oosterhof, in his 81st year, went to be with his Lord.

Bert is survived by his beloved wife of 55 years, Johanna, and his children Leo and Susan of Brockville, Henry and Evelina of Jellyby, Alex and Julie of Jellyby, Gary and Corina of Kingston, Diane VandeMeent and John of Bowmanville, Annette Schreuders and Robert of Rockton, Paul and Wilma of Inkerman. Loving and cherished Opa of 28 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren. Predeceased by a daughter Wilma in infancy and one great-granddaughter, Cassandra. Sadly missed by 5 brothers and 2 sisters all of the Netherlands, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Lubertus was born on August 19, 1928 in Daarle, Overijssel, the Netherlands. He and his bride of three weeks immigrated to Canada in 1953. They farmed in Jellyby for 50 years. Bert was an active member of the Athens and later, Brockville Christian Reformed Church and a strong supporter of Christian Education. Bert loved to be with his wife, Jo, and cherished every moment of their life together. Bert's love and faith in God has blessed all those who knew him. Service of Remembrance and Praise was held at Bethel C.R.C.

Correspondence address: Mrs. J. Oosterhof
Unit 4 - 1171 Millwood Ave, Brockville ON K6V 7L5

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Westendorp, GE - March 29, 1912 Brampton, ON - September 27, 2008

After a brief illness, the Lord took to himself our mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and great-great-grandmother

WILLEMINA VAN ARRAGON Hoogendoorn (nee Kuipery)

in her 97th year.

Predeceased in 1980 by her husband, Johan van Arragon of 42 years.
In 1986 by her husband Hendrik Tempelman of 4 years.
In 1995 by her husband Dirk Hoogendoorn of 8 years.

Mother of: Ali & John Looyenga – Acton, ON
Jack van Arragon – ON
Anne van Arragon Hutten – Kentville, NS
George & Freda van Arragon – St Catharines, ON
Dolf & Joan van Arragon – Cambridge, ON
Willy van Arragon & Ellwood Harris – Moffat, ON
Nellie Jonkman – Georgetown, ON
Gertie & John Krale – Petrolia, ON
John & Anne van Arragon – Red Deer, AB
Dirk van Arragon & Gloria Harford – Chatsworth, ON

Grandmother of: 50+; Great-grandmother of: 60+; Great-great-grandmother of: 2
Also survived by 1 brother and 4 sisters:
Jantje Veneberg, Gerda Wittenberg, Henk Kuiperij, Leida Kuiperij, Marie de Groot

On October 1, Rev. Jacob Kuntz officiated the funeral service at Bethel CRC in Acton.

Lord's Day 1: What is your only comfort in life and in death? That I am not my own, but belong body and soul, in life and in death to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.

Correspondence address: Ali Looyenga: 13361 4th Line RR 4, Acton ON L7J 2M1
Email: alilva@sympatico.ca

Advertising / Job Opportunities

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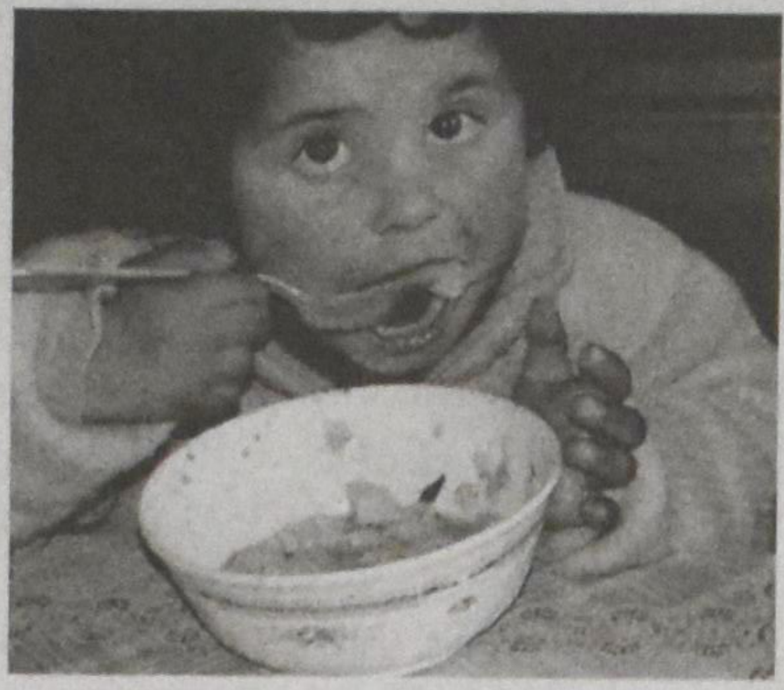
Lethbridge, Alberta T1H 0N5
Phone: 403-317-7860
Email: henry.ronda@gmail.com



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For a detailed job description or to submit a resume, contact
James Doelman, Chair
London Campus Ministries Committee
625 Middlewoods Drive, London ON Canada N6G 1W7
jdoelman@uwo.ca.
Closing date: Dec. 1, 2008 or when position filled.

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Job description and church profile are available by contacting
Elaine van Wyngaarden (search Committee chair) at
519-756-8524 (email: dealk@rogers.com)
or Pastor Ken Benjamins at 519-759-7581
(email pastorken@silomail.com)

AN OPPORTUNITY TO SERVE IN PART-TIME MINISTRY!

The Burlington CRC is now receiving applications for an exacting opportunity to provide leadership to our small groups and outreach ministries.

A job description for this role as *Ministries Coordinator* is available upon request from Tina at office@burlingtoncrc.ca .

Resumes can be forwarded by **Nov 1st** to the same address.

CLASSIS HAMILTON, a region of 17 churches and several ministries within The Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA), has a **half-time opening** for

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To be considered, submit a copy of your resume or application and a cover letter *November 15, 2008* to Al Karsten (karstena@crcna.ca).

Please contact Al Karsten, Andrew Zantingh (pastor@firsthamilton.ca) or Kevin DeRaaf (deraaf@faithcrc.ca) for a more detailed job description or more information.

Lecturer in Missions

The Reformed Theological College, Geelong, Australia, is seeking to appoint a full-time lecturer in Missions and one other key teaching area (Theology, Ethics, Church History or Practical Theology). The expected starting date is January 2010.

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Written applications should address all aspects of the job description, which is available on request. A full CV and contact details for three referees should also be included.

For further information email **principal@rtc.vic.edu.au** or write to:

The Principal
Reformed Theological College
125 Pigdons Rd
Waurn Ponds 3216
Australia

Applications close 16 January 2009

Emmanuel Home

13425 – 57 Street Edmonton Alberta T5A 2G1
Telephone (780) 478-2051 Fax (780) 473-0970
email: news@emmanuelhome.ab.ca
website: www.emmanuelhome.ab.ca

Position available:

Executive Director for Emmanuel Home

The Executive Director serves in an advisory capacity to the Board in determining decisions of policy and becomes the chief agent for carrying out these decisions and provides executive control of all the Christian Senior Citizens Homes Society of Northern Alberta, (Emmanuel Home) operations and activities.
Emmanuel Home is recruiting an Executive Director with the following qualifications &/or credentials to begin as soon as possible and will bring the following to this position:

1. A degree in health-care or business administration, humanities, education or a combination of education and experience in one of the relevant disciplines. Candidates with experience in the Service industry will be considered.
2. Commitment to the Mission and Vision of the Christian Senior Citizens Homes Society of Northern Alberta operating as Emmanuel Home. Must be a Christian and a member of the Society.
3. Interpersonal skills of sensitivity and compassion, as well as persuasive oral and written communication skills.

In addition the successful candidate shall have the following skills or a combination of knowledge or experience with:

1. Computers including Word, Excel, email, internet programs.
2. Financial management including contracts, budgets, staffing and Alberta Labour standards.
3. Construction industry as Emmanuel Home is preparing to expand with 54 new units.
4. Managing staffing and multiple programs.
5. Supportive Living Residents and/or knowledge of Alberta's Supportive Living Accommodation Standards.

Please reply with resume & references in writing to Gwyneth Pelster, Administrator Emmanuel Home, email gpelster@emmanuelhome.ab.ca or call 780-478-2051 for further information. Job description provided on request.

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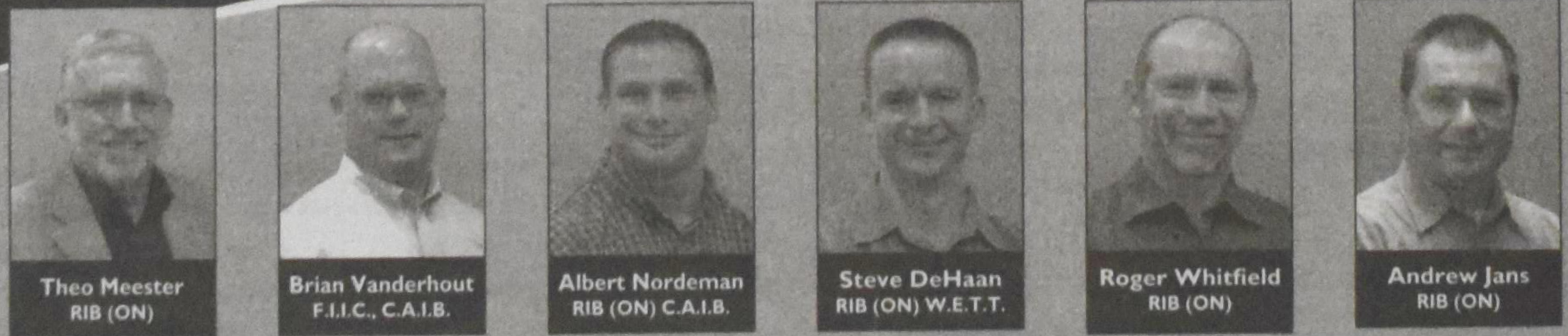

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Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS - 2008

Oct 25 Benefit Concert 7:30 p.m. for Eurovangelism, with Rev. Brian Lise. Choir – Organ –Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. Admission Free. Collection Eurovangelism St.George's Anglican Church. 99 Woolwich Street. **Guelph**

Nov 6 Organ recital featuring Stephanie Burgoyne (ARCCO) and William Vandertuin (solo and organ four hands) at Trinity Anglican Church, **Cambridge**, 12:15 p.m. (wvan08@rogers.com)

Nov 8 The Lighthouse Fundraising Dinner and Silent Auction, 377 Woodbridge Ave.,**Woodbridge,** ON. Doors open at 5:30 Dinner 6:15 RSVP Janet 416-535-6262 or janet@lighthousecentre.ca

Nov 8 Trillium League Reunion (Ontario) If you were involved in Trillium League Youth during the years of 1975 and 1982, you are invited to reminisce & reconnect from 4-9 p.m. at Community CRC in **Kitchener**. For details go to www.trilliumleaguereunion.com or email Phia (Hoogendoorn) Howes at phia@sympatico.ca or call 519-699-5942.

Nov 14-16 Reformed Marriage Encounter weekend in **Peterborough**. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_registration@reformedme.org.

Nov 19 Festive Concert, OCMA Come back. Choir – Organ – Panflute – Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. 7:30 p.m. Admission Adults: $20.00 under 12: $10.00 Georgetown CRC, 11611 Trafalger Rd., **Georgetown** ON. Phone OCMA at 416-636-9779

Nov 22 Festive Concert, OCMA Come back. Choir 7:30 p.m. – Organ – Panflute –Trumpet – Vocal Quartet & Audience. Admission Adults: $20.00 under 12: $10.00. Springdale CRC, 1466 5th Sideroad, **Bradford** ON Phone OCMA at 416-636-9779

Nov 23 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Harry VanderWindt will be preaching.

Dec 7 St. Lukes Annual Christmas Concert 3:00 pm. We will feature 25 members of the Liberation Choir in this annual event at St. Lukes Anglican Church, 1382 Ontario St, **Burlington**, ON.

Dec 13 The Liberation Choir will lead the 5th Annual Christmas Sing-a-long Concert, 7 pm at Rehoboth Christian Reformed Church in Bowmanville,130 Scugog Rd, **Bowmanville**. ON

Dec 17 The Ambassadors Christian Male Chorus and The Ladies Advent Singers will render a concert of praise to Christ the King at 8:00 pm in Mt. **Hamilton** Christian Reformed Church. 1411 Upper Wellington Street. Free will offering.

Dec 19 The Ambassadors and Ladies Advent Singers are guests at The Holland Christian Homes annual participating Christmas concert at 7:30 pm. Offering for HCH's broadcast ministries.

Dec 20 The Liberation Choir 5th Annual Christmas Sing-a-long Concert with the Steeltown Orchestra. at 7pm, at St. Giles United Church, Main St E. & 85 Holton Ave S., **Hamilton**.

Dec 21 Liberation Choir Georgetown / Salvation Army Christmas fundraiser Charity Concert 7:00 pm, Georgetown Christian Reformed Church1161 Trafalgar Road, **Georgetown**, ON

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Cardus Senior Fellow and Editor of Comment,
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& Adjunct Professor, Redeemer University College

Jesus and Me... and Everything

NOVEMBER 5, 2008

Chapel: *"Sudden Change and Lifelong Faithfulness"* 11:00 am - Auditorium
Afternoon Session: Open Forum Disussion *3:00 pm - Room 214*
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For more information, please contact 905-648-2139 x4414 or mraddatz@redeemer.ca

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News

New tool for 'green' Christians: ecofriendly Bible

Printed on recycled paper with soy ink, the new edition highlights more than 1,000 passages in green.

Jane Lampman (CSM)

Can a "green" Bible bring more of the Christian community into the growing "creation care" movement? Many people of faith, including young Evangelicals, hope so.

This past weekend, Christian college students from across the US kicked off an effort to become catalysts for environmental action on campuses and in churches. The student-initiated Renewal network, which gathered at Eastern University in Pennsylvania, has a new resource to help them: an ecofriendly version of the Good Book published by HarperOne.

Produced with soy-based inks, recycled paper, and a cotton/linen cover, "The Green Bible" highlights in green more than a thousand passages relating to God's love for creation and the role of humans in caring for the earth.

"It's beautifully put together. I appreciate that they used sustainable materials," says Anna Jane Joyner, Renewal's coordinator. "It's a great compilation of different resources."

Along with the biblical text, the book includes a set of essays by theologians and conservationists (including Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Brian McLaren, and Pope John Paul II). There's a concordance on environmental subjects and a study guide on "green" biblical themes for use by individuals and church or campus groups.

"Many younger people very much feel it is part of the Christian message to take care of the world," says Michael Maudlin, coproject editor for HarperOne. "So we wanted to give them a primer to help people understand that Earth care is part of the mandate God gives us."

For others working to spur a church awakening on environmental issues, the new Bible is a welcome development. "It helps rectify a misperception that this is not a biblical issue," says Peter Illyn, an evangelical pastor who founded an environmental stewardship group called Restoring Eden to foster awareness across the denominational spectrum. (The Green Bible comes in the New Revised Standard Version, which is accepted by Protestants, Roman Catholics, and the Orthodox.)

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